

CHAN 3100



GREAT OPERATIC ARIAS

GREAT OPERATIC ARIAS
BRUCE FORD 2

CHANDOS
OPERA IN
ENGLISH



PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



Bruce Ford as Antenore in
Rossini's *Zelmira* at the
Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro

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Great Operatic Arias

with

Bruce Ford

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)*from* **Messiah**

Recitative and Aria

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| [1] 'Comfort ye my people' – | 3:24 | [p. 50] |
| [2] 'Ev'ry valley shall be exalted' | 3:31 | [p. 50] |

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)*from* **Così fan tutte** (All women are like that)

Ferrando's Aria (Un'aura amorosa)

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| [3] 'Her beauty's a wonder' | 4:34 | [p. 50] |
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from **The Clemency of Titus**

Titus's Aria (Se al impero)

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'Betrayed me... Abused me...' | 3:51 | [p. 50] |
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from **The Clemency of Titus**

Titus's Aria (Del più sublime soglio)

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Trio of Rinaldo, Carlo and Ubaldo (In quale aspetto imbelles)

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with Barry Banks and Dennis O'Neil tenors | 3:21 | [p. 51] |
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Otello and Iago's Duet (Non m'inganno)

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Bruce Ford tenor		
London Philharmonic Orchestra		
Gareth Hancock assistant conductor		
David Parry		



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Great Operatic Arias

Each issue in this series of solo recitals presents, in the first place, an individual artist, a singer who has been selected on merit and whose qualities can be more fully appreciated when they are shown in sequence over a wide repertory rather than merely as one part in the context of a whole opera. But the intention goes a little further. The singers represent, in turn, a particular type of voice, the 'coloratura' soprano for instance, the lyric baritone or the dramatic bass. With each type goes its appropriate repertory, and another part of the scheme is to explore and illustrate this. The present disc is the second in which Bruce Ford sings operatic arias (he has also recorded a recital of Viennese operetta [CHAN 3088]). The first arias disc (CHAN 3006) presented the lyric tenor in a 'central' programme, with well-known arias such as Handel's 'Where'er you walk', Donizetti's 'I saw the tear' ('Una furtiva lagrima'), the Serenade from Bizet's *The Fair Maid of Perth* and the Hindu song from Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*. This is the fare of the *tenore di grazia*, the Tito Schipa, Heddle Nash or Léopold Simoneau of a generation or two ago. In this second disc, the type is less easily defined.

It is no disparagement of the three distinguished lyric tenors mentioned just now, nor of Bruce Ford himself, to say that anyone who knows his art well might hesitate to place him side-by-side with them. For one thing, he belongs to this later age which has developed a special expertise in florid music such as not so long ago was widely held to have been un-singable since the days of the virtuosi for whom it was written. The tenor parts in Rossini's operas are an example. Mr Ford's previous recital ended with the aria 'Finish this futile argument' ('Cessa di più resistere') almost invariably omitted from performances and recordings of *The Barber of Seville* until recent times. That pointed ahead to the present disc, putting him historically within a different category, for nothing we know from records or reports of the earlier tenors mentioned, as representatives of their times, suggests that their exercise of the florid technique extended to encompass this particular kind of brilliance. There is more of it in this second programme, but also an extension of scope which goes still further.

Among the Rossini operas sampled here is his *Otello*, the title-role of which calls for a tenor who, while having the flexibility and upward range of his Count Almaviva in *The Barber*, also requires a darker, weightier tone in reserve, something closer to the modern heroic tenor. The part was written for Manuel Garcia, first sung by Andreas Nozzari, then becoming a favourite with Gilbert Duprez. Nozzari had a powerful voice with a two-and-a-half octave range, from the bass A to a top D. Duprez is said to have revolutionised the public expectations of an operatic tenor, astonishing his audiences with high notes from the chest, up to the top C. He was also famous for the *voix sombrée*, the darkened tone; also for impassioned declamation and, as one observer put it, a voice of 'molten ore'. Among his many world-premieres was Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*, whose love song is another item in this programme, introducing the lyric tenor to a style of singing which will stand up to the more robust role assigned to the orchestra.

When we talk of a 'voice-type', the very term presupposes the existence, over the years, of a number of singers who fall within the category. Here it is not so easy. Leaving aside the present generation (many more of whom

have specialised in Rossini than hitherto), the tenor most likely to come to mind is probably Nicolai Gedda. In his prime he had the traditional lyric tenor's sweetness and, in his early days especially, a winning lightness of touch. His voice was wide in its range and well-practised in fluency, and his thorough musicianship and linguistic skills helped him master an extensive repertory. Otherwise it might be necessary to look further afield, to the Russian virtuoso tenor Ivan Kozlovsky or go further back to some of the earlier French school and the endlessly fascinating Fernando De Lucia. At all events, it would be no more than justice to suggest that today's listener should realise that the singer who can encompass this particular field in vocal music is historically something of a rarity. This is a voice-type of which very few can be called typical.

A gentle irony, then, for British readers at least, may attach itself to the realisation that, laid out chronologically, the recital opens with a solo from Handel's *Messiah*. For two centuries and more, *Messiah* in Britain has been musical bread-and-butter, the very definition-by-example of what is 'typical', with nothing exotic about it. The more interesting point is that in a wider context this itself is

atypical, almost a national eccentricity. For, despite what has been seen as its 'wholesome plainness', *Messiah* is also a masterwork by the master of baroque. For the elements of the plain-and-simple (which the Victorians tended to equate with sincerity) there is almost as much in which the vocal line, for choir as well as soloists, breaks up into sequences of florid runs of the kind generally thought of as the coloratura soprano's monopoly.

The first voice heard in the oratorio is the solo tenor's. His accompanied recitative, 'Comfort ye my people' (track [1]), is a wonderfully imaginative piece of writing, the degree of its 'plainness' depending in performance on the view that its editor, singer and conductor take on the question of ornamentation. Ideas vary, for instance, on what should be done with the long-held note on 'comfort', the nineteenth century and early twentieth taking its literal simplicity for granted, with the practice of embellishment gaining ground in the 1950s and '60s, later falling back into decorative moderation. But about the baroque character of the aria which follows ('Ev'ry valley shall be exalted', track [2]) there can be no argument. The opening phrases are simple and unadorned, but soon the voice sets off on a running-track

where speed and agility meet with the additional challenges of a long-jump and syncopated step-change. Comparable in style is the aria 'Rejoice greatly' (track [4]), which follows the chorus of angels heard by the shepherds at the time of Christ's death. The aria appears here in Mozart's arrangement, sung by a tenor rather than Handel's soprano.

Handel's most favoured English tenor was John Beard, who sang in many performances of *Messiah* and created the title-roles in *Samson*, *Judas Maccabeus* and *Jephtha*. The writing there requires a well-trained voice, to be sure, but then, in each, it seems that the composer had in mind not so much the singer's agility and technical brilliance, as his expressiveness, depth and power. It is in these non-operatic roles that the tenor voice takes a decisive step towards what we would consider modernity; it also takes the central position occupied up to that time by the castrati. Beard, we might also note, outlived Handel and died in 1791, the year of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

The age of Handel and that of Mozart seem to us further apart than they were, in terms of years if not of style. Beard would have heard reports of the boy Mozart when he played in London. In turn, the tenor particularly

associated with Mozart as a mature composer, Anton Raaf, made his debut as early as 1736, six years before Handel wrote his *Messiah*. It was for Raaf, then sixty-seven, that Mozart wrote the title-role of *Idomeneo*, something of whose musical and moral identity survives also in the magnanimous hero of *The Clemency of Titus*. Both of the arias included in this recital link back to Handel in their musical form, while moving further from the baroque, ornamental style towards a plainer, unadorned expressiveness. In a broad sense, both solos are philosophical, the Act I aria ('The true sublime enjoyment', track [6]) stating the Emperor's belief in benevolent government, the other ('If this empire', track [4]) resolving to put his principles into practice, even to the extent of sparing the life of a traitor.

Closer to the general notion of the lyric tenor is the role of Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* (*All women are like that*). Here is the young man in love, the vocal line of his aria ('Her beauty's a wonder', track [3]) elegantly poised throughout a melody which never takes him above the A natural but lies high in the voice, spinning phrases of a delicate beauty that must sound as easy and natural as breathing. The other solo, ('All my thoughts are in turmoil' – 'Betrayed me... Abused me...', track [5])

angry with the conviction of betrayal, develops a different vocal style, more akin to the passion of Verdi's tenors in a declamatory line which culminates in his *Otello*.

But before Verdi's *Otello* came Rossini's. The passage heard now ('It is certain: she wrote this letter', track [10]) corresponds to the Oath duet in Verdi and the climax of the 'temptation' scene in Shakespeare. Iago, deceiving Otello into believing his wife is faithless, triumphs while Otello vows vengeance. In this version, however, Iago is another tenor, whose quality must throw into relief the deeper, more noble character of the Moor. The style is still florid, but the timbre heroic. Rather similarly, the fiercely ambitious Antenore in *Zelmira* requires the heft of a dramatic tenor while commanding the flexibility associated with the lighter lyric voice. His aria here, ('What is this, companions', track [12]) taken from the beginning of the opera, appears to bewail the death of the warrior king, Azor, who has in fact been slain by Antenore's henchman Leucippo in order to help his master to the throne. The trio from *Armida* ('I lost the will to action', track [7]) is, rather amazingly, scored entirely for tenors but concentrates on the crusader-hero Rinaldo, who has shamefully

fallen victim to the arts of the sorceress Armida. The role of Rinaldo, like Antenore and Otello, was sung originally by Nozzari, and the three excerpts together give some idea of the extraordinary qualities of voice, virtuosity, power and expressiveness for which he was famous.

Rossini's other favourite tenor was Manuel Garcia, the first Count Almaviva in **The Barber of Seville**. His serenade ('My poor heart is so full of emotion', track [8]) calls for pure lyricism in the singer. The solo from the **Petite Messe solennelle**, ('Lord God almighty', track [9]) by contrast, is vigorous, even heroic in style. In one of his last recordings the great tenor Caruso showed magnificently but all too clearly the kind of meaning which that word 'heroic' ought not to imply.

A composer who contributed notably, in operas such as *Le Prophète* and *L'Africaine*, to the development of the heroic or dramatic tenor was Meyerbeer. Those grand Parisian works lay in the future in 1824 when **The Crusader in Egypt** had its successful premiere at Venice. These were early days, and Meyerbeer, working in Italy, came inevitably under the influence of Rossini. The tenor-role of Adrian of Montfort, Grand Master of the Knights of Rhodes, is essentially lyrical but still

a demanding one. The prayer heard here ('Death's unrelenting call', track [13]) comes late in the opera, when the Sultan has imprisoned Adrian and his knights, who, in this hymn, prepare for death – unnecessarily, as it happens, for operas in this period were not supposed to end unhappily, and deliverance is at hand.

The aria of **Benvenuto Cellini** in the opera by Berlioz ('My life to art I dedicated', track [11]) is similarly a lyrical episode in what is, in sum, a decidedly strenuous role. Even in this, the high-lying music intensifies towards the end of the verses and the singer is put on his mettle. The great sculptor at this point in his career has fallen in love with the Papal Treasurer's daughter, Teresa, and so ardent is his passion that it seems to him more important even than his art – which will nevertheless be his salvation in what is another operatic happy-ending wrought perilously out of trouble. Performances of the work are rare, and so are tenors to sing the title-role. Gedda's triumph at Covent Garden and elsewhere reinforces the suggestion made earlier that he, if anyone of his generation, is nearest to representing the voice-type which Bruce Ford has embodied in the present.

As for the two encore-pieces, we should probably simply take them in the spirit in

which they are offered. Songs from two very different kinds of 'musical', they are here in the best traditions of the encore – tuneful, charming, unexpected and popular. Perhaps it might be added that 'My heart and I' (track [15]) reminds us of one more tenor. Lyrical and versatile, with gifts which might well have led him into such an enterprising repertoire as this, Richard Tauber was also a composer and conductor. He produced his operetta **Old Chelsea** in London during the darkest days of the Second World War, and sang the leading role more than 700 times. In 1947 he was taken ill, and having made a last operatic appearance at Covent Garden in *Don Giovanni*, died early the following year. He was a prolific recording artist, and his discography lists titles 1 to 735. 733 was the hit-number from the newly popular **Oklahoma!**: 'Oh, what a beautiful mornin' (track [16]).

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American tenor **Bruce Ford** is firmly established as one of today's most outstanding singers. He has earned high praise for his extraordinary vocal beauty and range, textual vividness, authoritative style, and technical prowess, as well as for his expressive acting

Bill Cooper



ability. He is a regular guest in major houses throughout North America and Europe, where he specialises in highly demanding works of Mozart and the *bel canto* composers. For more than a decade

Bruce Ford has been instrumental in the re-evaluation of many *bel canto* operas, both on disc and in live performances. Many venues have revived unjustly neglected operas especially for him, including The Royal Opera (Rossini's *Otello*) and the festivals of Glyndebourne (*Ermione*) and Pesaro (*Zelmira*, Rossini's *Otello*). He has also appeared at La Scala, the opera houses of Naples, Florence, and Bologna; and Maggio Musicale Fiorentino and the Salzburg Festival. Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* – the role he has performed most frequently in his career to date – was the vehicle for his debuts at The Royal Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera and Dallas Opera.

His concert appearances have included performances in such renowned venues as

La Scala, the Edinburgh Festival, Carnegie Hall and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and he is a sought after recitalist. Conductors he has worked with include Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Bonyngue, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Colin Davis and David Parry, to name but a few.

Bruce Ford has documented much of his repertoire on disc, with performances including the original version of *Lucia di Lammermoor* under Sir Charles Mackerras; three solo operatic recitals (Romantic Heroes and Serious Rossini on Opera Rara and Great Operatic Arias for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation); and Opera Rara's releases of rare operas of Mayr, Donizetti, Pacini, and Rossini, for which he receives consistently favourable reviews. Ford's triumphant portrayals of Mozart's *Mitridate* (The Royal Opera) and Oreste in *Ermione* (Glyndebourne) can be seen on video/DVD. After nearly two decades on stage, the tenor's repertoire is still expanding, and he has recently added the title roles in Mozart's operas *La clemenza di Tito* and *Idomeneo*.

In recording his disc of operetta arias (CHAN 3088), Ford had a chance to go back to the earliest part of his career in Germany where he appeared in many of the works featured here.



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.

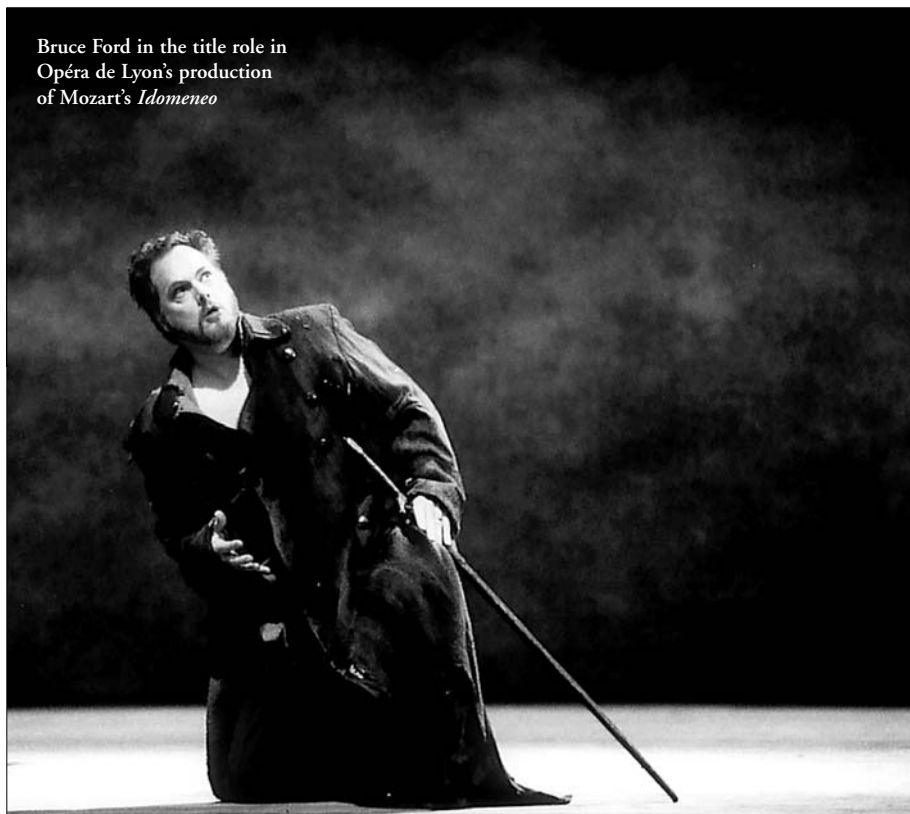
He works extensively in both opera and concert, nationally and internationally. He has conducted several productions at English National Opera and Opera North and appears regularly with the Philharmonia and London Philharmonic Orchestras. In 1996 he made his debut at the Glyndebourne Festival conducting *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 *The Thieving Magpie*, *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.



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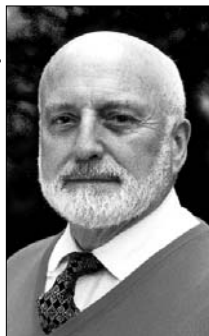
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SIR PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

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 repertory 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.

Große Opernarien

Jede Ausgabe dieser Reihe von Solo-Programmen präsentiert erst einmal einen einzelnen Künstler, einen Sänger, der aufgrund seiner Leistung ausgewählt wurde, und dessen besondere Qualitäten sich anhand solch eines breitgefächerten Repertoires besser einschätzen lassen, als nur in einer einzelnen Rolle im Zusammenhang einer ganzen Oper. Doch das Ziel ist noch etwas weiter gesteckt. Jeder der Sänger repräsentiert eine bestimmte Art von Stimme, so etwa den Koloratursopran, den lyrischen Bariton oder den dramatischen Baß. Zu jedem Stimmtypus gehört das passende Repertoire und eine weitere Intention dieses Projekts liegt darin, diese Verbindung auszuloten und zu illustrieren. Die vorliegende CD großen Opernarien ist die zweite, mit der Bruce Ford in dieser Reihe vertreten ist. Er spielte außerdem eine CD mit Wiener Operettenmelodien, CHAN 3088, ein.) Die erste CD mit Opernarien (CHAN 3006) zeigte den lyrischen Tenor mit einem Programm bekannter Arien aus dem "zentralen" Repertoire, wie etwa Händels "Where'er you walk", Donizettis "I saw the tear" ("Una furtiva lagrima"), der Serenade aus

Bizets *La Jolie Fille de Perth* und dem Hindu-Lied aus Rimsky-Korsakows *Sadko*. So sieht das Repertoire eines *tenore di grazia* aus, eines Tito Schipa, Heddle Nash oder Léopold Simoneau vor einer oder zwei Generationen. Bei dieser zweiten CD läßt sich der Typus weniger leicht bestimmen.

Es soll weder eine Herabsetzung der drei eben erwähnten distinguierten lyrischen Tenöre noch von Bruce Ford selber bedeuten, wenn man sagt, daß jeder, der seine künstlerische Arbeit gut kennt, zögern würde, diese vier in einem Atemzug zu nennen. Zum einen gehört Bruce Ford unserem späteren Zeitalter an, das eine besondere Expertise für jene reich verzierte Musik entwickelt hat, von der vor nicht allzu langer Zeit noch behauptet wurde, sie sei seit der Zeit der Virtuosen, für die sie entstanden war, unsingbar geworden. Ein Beispiel sind die Tenorpartien in Rossinis Opern. Bruce Fords letztes Solo-Programm endete mit der Arie "Finish this futile argument" ("Cessa di più resistere"), die bis vor kurzem noch fast ausnahmslos aus Aufführungen und Aufnahmen von *Il barbiere di Siviglia* gestrichen wurde. Dieser letzte

Programmpunkt wies bereits nach vorn und auf die vorliegende CD hin, und platziert den Sänger historisch gesehen in eine andere Kategorie, denn nichts was uns aus Aufnahmen von oder Berichten über die erwähnten Tenöre als Stellvertreter ihrer Zeit bekannt ist, läßt erkennen, daß ihre Beherrschung der Koloraturtechnik dieses Maß an Brillanz aufwies. Dies wird in dieser zweiten Sammlung fortgeführt, doch außerdem findet eine noch viel weiter reichende Erweiterung des künstlerischen Anspruchs statt.

Zu den hier ausgewählten Rossini-Opern gehört auch der *Otello*, dessen Titelrolle nach einem Tenor verlangt, der zwar einerseits über die Flexibilität und den hohen Umfang eines Grafen Almaviva aus dem *Barbier* verfügt, andererseits aber auch dunklere, schwerere Töne vorweisen kann, und insofern dem modernen Helden Tenor ähnelt. Die Partie wurde für Manuel Garcia geschaffen, zuerst von Andreas Nozzari gesungen und war eine der Lieblingsrollen von Gilbert Duprez. Nozzari hatte eine kraftvolle Stimme mit einem Umfang von zweieinhalb Oktaven, vom großen A bis zum zweigestrichenen D. Von Duprez sagt man, er habe die öffentliche Erwartungshaltung einem Operntenor

gegenüber radikal verändert, indem er sein Publikum durch mit Bruststimme gesungene hohe Töne bis zum hohen C erstaunte. Er war auch berühmt für die *voix sombrée*, also den abgedunkelten Klang; weiterhin für leidenschaftliche Deklamation und, wie es ein Kommentator ausdrückte, eine Stimme von "geschmolzenem Erz". Zu den vielen Partien, deren Uraufführungen er sang, gehörte auch Berlioz' *Benvenuto Cellini*, dessen Liebeslied ebenfalls in dieser Sammlung vorliegt. Hier wird der lyrische Tenor in einen Gesangsstil eingeführt, der sich auch gegen die robustere Rolle des Orchesters durchsetzen kann.

Wenn man von einem "Stimmtypus" spricht, so setzt das voraus, daß es über die Jahre eine Anzahl von Sängern gibt, die in diese Kategorie hineinpassen. In diesem Falle ist das nicht so einfach. Läßt man die heutige Generation, in der sich viel mehr Sänger als bisher auf Rossini spezialisiert haben, außer acht, so ist der Tenor, der am ehesten in Frage kommt, wohl Nicolai Gedda. In seiner Blütezeit besaß er die Süße des traditionellen lyrischen Tenors und, besonders in jungen Jahren, eine einnehmende Leichtigkeit der Tongebung. Seine Stimme besaß einen großen Umfang und war von geübter Gewandtheit, und mit Hilfe seines umfassenden

musikalischen Könnens und seiner sprachlichen Fähigkeiten meisterte er ein beträchtliches Repertoire. Ansonsten müßte man den Blick weiter in die Ferne richten, wie etwa auf den virtuosen russischen Tenor Iwan Koslowsky oder weiter zurück auf einige Vertreter der früheren französischen Schule und den immer wieder faszinierenden Fernando De Lucia. Auf jeden Fall wäre es nur gerecht dem heutigen Hörer nahezulegen, daß es sich bei einem Sänger, der dieses besondere Gebiet der Vokalmusik beherrscht, um eine historische Seltenheit handelt. Dies ist ein Stimmtypus, für den nur sehr wenige Sänger typisch sind.

Dem britischen Leser des vorliegenden Textes mag es daher leicht ironisch erscheinen, daß die Sammlung, die chronologisch aufgebaut ist, mit einem Solo aus Händels *Messiah* beginnt. Seit mehr als zwei Jahrhunderten gilt der *Messiah* in Großbritannien als musikalisches "Grundnahrungsmittel", die absolute Definition des "Typischen" und mit nicht einmal einem Hauch von Exotik behaftet. Interessanter jedoch ist es, daß dieser Umstand im größeren Zusammenhang betrachtet eigentlich selbst atypisch ist, fast eine nationale Exzentrizität. Denn obwohl er als ein Werk

von "gesunder Einfachheit" wahrgenommen wird, handelt es sich bei dem *Messiah* doch um ein Meisterwerk des Meisters des Barock. Neben den Elementen des Einfachen und Klaren, von den Bürgern des viktorianischen Zeitalters oft mit Ehrlichkeit gleichgesetzt, steht fast genausoviel Musik, in der die Gesangslinie, sei es im Chor oder in den Soli, in jene Art von Sequenzen reich verzierter Läufe ausbricht, die normalerweise als Monopol des Koloratursoprans betrachtet werden.

Die erste Stimme, die in dem Oratorium zu hören ist, ist die des Solo-Tenors. Das accompagnato-Rezitativ "Comfort ye my people" (Band [1]) ist eine wunderbar einfallsreiche Komposition, deren "Einfachheit" in der Aufführung davon abhängt, welcher Meinung der Herausgeber, der Sänger und der Dirigent sind, was Verzierungen angeht. Beispielsweise gehen die Meinungen auseinander, was mit dem langangehaltenen Ton auf "comfort" passieren sollte. Im neunzehnten und frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert wurde die wörtliche Einfachheit des Tones als selbstverständlich angenommen, in den 1950ern und 60ern nahm die Praxis des Verzierens zu, und inzwischen hat man sich auf einen gemäßigten

Kompromiß geeignet. Der barocke Charakter der sich anschließenden Arie ("Ev'ry valley shall be exalted", Band [2]) steht jedoch außer Frage. Die ersten Phrasen sind noch einfach und schlicht, doch schon bald begibt sich die Stimme auf eine Art Rennbahn, wo außer Geschwindigkeit und Beweglichkeit auch noch die zusätzlichen Herausforderungen von langen Sprüngen und Synkopierungen hinzukommen. Stilistisch vergleichbar ist die Aria "Rejoice greatly" (Band [4]), welche an den Engelschor, den die Hirten zu Christ Geburt vernehmen, anschließt. Diese Arie erscheint hier in der Bearbeitung von Mozart, und wird nicht wie bei Händel vom Sopran, sondern vom Tenor gesungen.

Händels bevorzugter englischer Tenor war John Beard, der bei vielen Aufführungen des *Messiah* sang und außerdem die Titelpartien von *Samson*, *Judas Maccabeus* und *Jephtha* schuf. Sicherlich verlangt diese Musik nach einer gut ausgebildeten Stimme, doch scheint der Komponist bei jeder dieser Partien sein Augenmerk nicht so sehr auf die Wendigkeit und technische Brillanz des Sängers, sondern vielmehr auf dessen Ausdrucksvermögen, Tiefgang und Kraft gerichtet zu haben. Es sind gerade diese nicht der Oper zugehörigen Rollen, in denen die Tenorstimme einen

entscheidenden Schritt in Richtung dessen tut, was wir Modernität nennen würden. Außerdem wird ihr nun die zentrale Position zuteil, die bis dahin die Kastraten innehatten. Es bleibt noch anzumerken, daß Beard Händel überlebte und 1791, also dem Jahr, in dem Mozart *Così fan tutte* schrieb, starb.

Die Zeitalter Händels und Mozarts scheinen uns weiter voneinander entfernt, als sie es in Jahren eigentlich waren – stilistische Gesichtspunkte einmal außer acht lassend. Beard wird Berichte über Mozart gehört haben, als dieser als Junge in London auftrat. Andererseits debütierte Anton Raaf, also jener Tenor, der mit dem reifen Komponisten Mozart besonders verbunden war, bereits im Jahre 1736, sechs Jahre bevor Händel den *Messiah* schrieb. Für Raaf, inzwischen 67 Jahre alt, schrieb Mozart die Titelpartie des *Idomeneo*, und ein Teil von dessen musikalischer und moralischer Identität überlebt auch in dem großmütigen Helden von *The Clemency of Titus*. Beide Arien dieser Sammlung schlagen in ihrer musikalische Form den Bogen zurück zu Händel, während sie sich gleichzeitig von dem barocken, ausgezierten Stil entfernen und einer einfacheren, schlichteren Ausdruckskraft zuwenden. Im weiteren Sinne sind beide Soli

philosophischer Natur, die Arie aus dem ersten Akt ("The true sublime enjoyment", Band [6]) da der Kaiser in ihr seinem Glauben an eine gütige Herrschaftsform Ausdruck verleiht und die andere ("If this empire", Band [4]), da er sich hier entschließt, seine Prinzipien in die Praxis umzusetzen, selbst wenn dies bedeutet, das Leben eines Verräters zu verschonen.

Die Rolle des Ferrando in **Così fan tutte** kommt da der allgemeinen Vorstellung von einem lyrischen Tenors schon näher. Ein verliebter junger Mann, die Gesangslinie seiner Arie ("Her beauty's a wonder", Band [3]) elegant ausbalanciert in einer Melodie, die zwar nie über A hinausführt, aber im ganzen hoch angelegt ist und Phrasen von zarter Schönheit spinnt, die so leicht und natürlich wie das Atmen an sich klingen müssen. In dem anderen Solo ("All my thoughts are in turmoil" – "Betrayed me... Abused me...", Band [5]), das vom Zorn über den offenbaren Verrat durchdrungen ist, entwickelt der Komponist einen anderen Gesangsstil, der eher an die Leidenschaft der Verdi-Tenöre erinnert, deren deklamatorische Linie im *Otello* gipfelt.

Doch vor Verdis **Otello** kam Rossinis. Die hier zu hörende Passage ("It is certain: she wrote this letter", Band [10]) entspricht dem

Schwur-Duett in Verdis Oper und dem Höhepunkt der "Versuchungs"-Szene bei Shakespeare. Jago, der Otello auf betrügerische Art und Weise davon überzeugt hat, daß seine Frau ihn hintergeht, triumphiert, während Otello Rache schwört. In dieser Version ist jedoch auch Jago ein Tenor, dessen Stimmqualität den tiefer gehenden, nobleren Charakter des Mooren hervorheben muß. Der Stil ist immer noch reich verziert, das Timbre jedoch heldenhaft. Ganz ähnlich verhält es sich mit der Partie des höchst ehrgeizigen Antenore in **Zelmira**, der sowohl über die Gewichtigkeit eines dramatischen Tenors als auch über die Flexibilität einer leichteren lyrischen Stimme verfügen muß. In seiner hier ausgewählte Arie ("What is this, companions", Band [12]) vom Beginn der Oper scheint er den Tod des Kriegerkönigs Azor zu beklagen, der aber in Wahrheit von Antenores Handlanger Leucippo umgebracht wurde, um seinem Meister auf den Thron zu verhelfen. Das Terzett aus **Armida** ("I lost the will to action", Band [7]) ist erstaunlicherweise ausschließlich mit drei Tenören besetzt, konzentriert sich aber auf den Kreuzritter und Helden Rinaldo, der den Künsten der Zauberin Armida schamvoll zum Opfer gefallen ist. Die Rolle des Rinaldo wurde, wie auch die des Antenore

und des Otello, ursprünglich von Nozzari gesungen, und gemeinsam geben diese drei Ausschnitte einen Eindruck von der außerordentlichen Stimme, Virtuosität, Kraft und Ausdruckstärke, für die er berühmt war.

Rossinis anderer Lieblingstenor war Manuel Garcia, der erste Graf Almaviva im **Barber of Seville**. Seine Serenade ("My poor heart is full of emotion", Band [8]) verlangt vom Sänger reine Lyrik. Das Solo aus der **Petite Messe solennelle**, ("Lord God almighty", Band [2]) dagegen ist stilistisch gesehen kraftvoll, ja fast heldenhaft. In einer seiner letzten Aufnahmen führte der große Tenor Caruso auf glanzvolle Art und Weise aber auch unzweideutig eben jene Bedeutung vor, die das Wort "heldenhaft" nicht haben sollte.

Ein weiterer Komponist, der mit Opern wie *Le Prophète* und *L'Africaine* beträchtlich zur Entwicklung des dramatischen oder Heldenentors beitrug, war Meyerbeer. Seine großen Pariser Werke lagen noch in der Zukunft, als im Jahre 1824 **The Crusader in Egypt** erfolgreich in Venedig uraufgeführt wurde. Meyerbeer stand noch am Anfang seiner Karriere und konnte sich, da er in Italien arbeitete, dem Einfluß Rossinis kaum entziehen. Die Tenorpartie des Adrian de Montfort, Großmeister der Kreuzritter von

Rhodos, ist im großen und ganzen lyrisch gehalten, aber dennoch anspruchsvoll. Das hier eingespielte Gebet ("Death's unrelenting call", Band [13]) hat seinen Platz im späteren Teil der Oper, als der Sultan Adrian und seine Ritter gefangengenommen hat und diese sich in dieser Hymne auf den Tod vorbereiten – unnötigerweise, wie sich herausstellt, denn Opern jener Zeit durften nicht unglücklich enden und die Rettung stand bevor.

Auch bei der Arie des **Benvenuto Cellini** aus Berlioz' gleichnamiger Oper ("My life to art I dedicated", Band [11]) handelt es sich um ein lyrisches Zwischenspiel in einer im ganzen ausgesprochen anstrengenden Partie. Selbst hier wird die hoch angelegte Musik gegen Ende immer intensiver, und das Stehvermögen des Sängers wird auf die Probe gestellt. Der große Bildhauer hat sich an diesem Punkt in seiner Karriere in Teresa, die Tochter des päpstlichen Schatzmeisters, verliebt, und seine Leidenschaft ist so groß, daß sie ihm sogar wichtiger scheint als seine Kunst – obwohl diese letztlich, in einem weiteren, gefährlich aus Schwierigkeiten errungenen Opern-Happy-End, seine Rettung sein wird. Aufführungen dieses Werks sind selten, ebenso wie Tenöre, welche die Titelpartie singen können. Die Triumphe, die Gedda mit dieser

Rolle am Covent Garden und anderswo feierte, unterstützen die frühere Vermutung, daß er in seiner Generation dem Stimmtypus, den Bruce Ford heute vertritt, am nächsten kam.

Die beiden Zugaben sollte man wohl in dem Geiste annehmen, in dem sie auch angeboten werden. Diese Lieder aus zwei ganz unterschiedlichen Arten von "Musical" repräsentieren die beste Tradition der Zugabe – melodisch, charmant, unerwartet und beliebt. Vielleicht könnte man noch hinzufügen, daß "My heart and I" (Band [15]) an einen weiteren Tenor erinnert. Mit einer Stimme voller Lyrik und Vielseitigkeit, und einer Begabung, die ihn durchaus auch in das hier dargestellte ungewöhnliche Repertoire hätte führen können, war Richard Tauber aber auch Komponist und Dirigent. Seine Operette **Old Chelsea** brachte er in London in den finstersten Tagen des Zweiten Weltkriegs auf die Bühne und sang die Hauptrolle über 700 Mal. Im Jahre 1947 erkrankte er, und nachdem er ein letztes Mal am Covent Garden im *Don Giovanni* auf der Bühne gestanden hatte, starb er Anfang des folgenden Jahres. Richard Tauber hatte viele Aufnahmen eingespielt, und in seiner Diskographie sind die Titel von 1 bis 735 durchnummeriert. Die Nummer 733 war der Hit aus dem sich neuer

Beliebtheit erfreuenden Musical **Oklahoma!** "Oh, what a beautiful mornin'" (Band [16]).

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Übersetzung: Bettina Reinke-Welsh

Der amerikanische Tenor **Bruce Ford** ist zweifellos einer der herausragenden Sänger unserer Zeit. Die außergewöhnliche Schönheit und der Umfang seiner Stimme, sein lebhafter Textausdruck und souveräner Stil, sein hohes technisches und schauspielerisches Können haben die Kritik zu größtem Lob veranlasst. An den berühmten Opernhäusern Nordamerikas und Europas gastiert er regelmäßig in den anspruchsvollen Rollen Mozarts und der Belcanto-Komponisten. Seit über einem Jahrzehnt hat Bruce Ford maßgeblich zu einer Neubewertung zahlreicher Belcanto-Opern beigetragen, sowohl auf Schallplatte als auch in Livedarbietungen. Vielerorts sind zu Unrecht vernachlässigte Opern speziell für ihn inszeniert worden, so etwa an der Royal Opera Covent Garden (Rossinis *Otello*) und bei den Festspielen von Glyndebourne (*Ermione*) und Pesaro (Zelmira, Rossinis *Otello*). Er ist auch an der Scala, den Opernhäusern von Neapel, Florenz und Bologna, beim Maggio Musicale

Fiorentino und bei den Salzburger Festspielen aufgetreten. Als Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (die von ihm am häufigsten verkörperte Rolle) debütierte er an der Royal Opera, Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera und Dallas Opera.

Bruce Ford hat Konzerte an der Scala, bei den Edinburgher Festspielen, in der Carnegie Hall und dem Concertgebouw Amsterdam gegeben und ist als Recitalkünstler vielgefragt. Dirigenten wie Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Bonynghe, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Colin Davis und David Parry haben mit ihm zusammengearbeitet.

Bruce Ford hat einen großen Teil seines Repertoires auf Schallplatte festgehalten, so etwa *Lucia di Lammermoor* in der Originalversion unter Sir Charles Mackerras, drei Solo-Opernrecitals ("Romantische Helden" und "Rossini serio" auf Opera Rara und "Große Opernarien" für die Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation) sowie auf Opera Rara selten aufgeführte Opern von Mayr, Donizetti, Pacini und Rossini. Diese Aufnahmen werden immer wieder von der Kritik gewürdigt. Seine Triumphe als Mozarts *Mitridate* (Royal Opera) und *Oreste* in Ermione (Glyndebourne) sind auf

Video/DVD zu sehen. Selbst nach zwei Jahrzehnten auf der Bühne erweitert er ständig sein Repertoire, so etwa kürzlich durch die Titelrollen in den Mozart-Opern *La clemenza di Tito* und *Idomeneo*.

Mit seiner Aufnahme von Operettenarien weckt Ford Erinnerungen an den Beginn seiner Karriere in Deutschland, wo er in vielen dieser Werke aufgetreten ist.

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*-Tournée und in Mexiko mit dem UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Zu den Neuproduktionen, die er in letzter Zeit dirigiert hat, zählen *Fidelio* beim New Zealand Festival, *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 *The Thieving Magpie*, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *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.



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Bruce Ford as Rodrigo
in San Francisco's Opera
production of Rossini's *Otello*

Grands airs d'opéra

Chacune des productions dans cette série de récitals a comme premier objectif de présenter un artiste distinct, un chanteur sélectionné pour ses talents et dont les qualités peuvent être mieux appréciées dans des interprétations successives couvrant un large répertoire que lors d'interventions isolées dans le contexte d'un opéra tout entier. Mais ces productions ont d'autres ambitions aussi. Les chanteurs représentent chacun un type particulier de voix, par exemple celle de soprano "coloratura", celle de baryton lyrique ou encore de basse dramatique. A chacun d'eux correspond un répertoire spécifique, et un autre objectif est d'explorer et d'illustrer celui-ci. Le présent enregistrement d'airs d'opéra est le second de Bruce Ford dans la série. (Il a aussi enregistré un disque illustrant l'Opérette, viennoise, CHAN 3088). Le premier enregistrement d'airs d'opéra présentait le ténor lyrique dans un programme "central", au travers d'arias célèbres tels "Where'er you walk" de Haendel, "I saw the tear" de Donizetti, la Sérénade de *La Jolie Fille de Perth* de Bizet et le chant hindou de *Sadko* de Rimski-Korsakov. Ceci alimentait le répertoire

du *tenore di grazia* dont Tito Schipa, Heddle Nash ou Léopold Simoneau étaient représentatifs, il y a une ou deux générations. Dans ce second enregistrement, le type de voix se laisse moins aisément définir.

Ce n'est point déprécier les trois éminents ténors lyriques qui viennent d'être cités, ni Bruce Ford lui-même, que de dire que tout spécialiste du talent de ce dernier hésitera à le placer à leurs côtés. Tout d'abord, Ford appartient à cette époque plus tardive qui a développé l'art très particulier de l'interprétation de la musique ornementée, souvent considérée, il y a peu encore, comme inchantable depuis le temps des virtuoses pour lesquels elle fut écrite. Les parties ténor dans les opéras de Rossini en sont un exemple. Le précédent récital de Bruce Ford se terminait par l'aria "Finish this futile argument" ("Cessa di più resistere") presque invariablement omis, jusqu'à une date récente, dans les exécutions ou les enregistrements du *Barbier de Séville*. Cet air annonçait le présent disque, plaçant le chanteur historiquement dans une catégorie différente, car rien de ce que nous savons au sujet des anciens ténors cités, en tant que représentants de leur époque, ne suggère

que leur technique d'interprétation de la musique ornementée leur permettait de couvrir ce type particulier de virtuosité. Il y a d'autres airs de ce genre dans ce second programme, mais son envergure est plus large encore.

Parmi les opéras de Rossini sélectionnés ici, figure *Otello* dont le rôle-titre demande un ténor qui possède, outre la flexibilité et le registre aigu du Comte Almaviva dans *Le Barbier de Séville*, des possibilités dans un registre plus sombre et profond, plus proches du ténor héroïque moderne. Cette partie fut écrite pour Manuel Garcia; elle fut créée par Andreas Nozzari, puis devint un air favori avec Gilbert Duprez. Nozzari avait une voix puissante avec une tessiture de deux octaves et demie. Duprez aurait, dit-on, révolutionné l'attente du public quant au ténor d'opéra, surprenant son auditoire par des notes hautes de poitrine, jusqu'au do supérieur. Il était célèbre aussi pour sa voix sombrée. Il l'était encore pour son style déclamatoire passionné et, comme le formulait un auditeur, une voix de "minerai en fusion". Parmi ses nombreuses créations mondiales figurent *Benvenuto Cellini* de Berlioz dont la chanson d'amour, reprise aussi dans cet enregistrement, amènera le ténor lyrique à un style d'interprétation qui s'imposera face au rôle plus robuste dévolu à l'orchestre.

Les termes mêmes de l'expression "type de voix" présupposent l'existence, au cours des ans, d'un certain nombre de chanteurs représentatifs de chacun d'eux. Mais ici, il n'est guère aisé d'en trouver. Laissant de côté la génération actuelle (qui s'est beaucoup plus souvent spécialisée dans l'interprétation de Rossini que cela n'a été le cas jusqu'à présent), il est fort probable que le ténor qui viendra à l'esprit sera Nicolai Gedda. A la fleur de l'âge, il avait la traditionnelle douceur du ténor lyrique et, dans sa jeunesse tout spécialement, une grâce irrésistible. Sa tessiture était ample et sa voix très fluide; de plus, son sens aiguisé de la musique et ses talents linguistiques l'ont aidé à maîtriser un vaste répertoire. Peut-être faut-il, sinon, regarder plus loin, et penser par exemple au ténor virtuose russe Ivan Kozlovsky ou retourner à certains chanteurs de l'école française et à Fernando De Lucia, éternellement fascinant. Quoi qu'il en soit, il ne serait que juste de suggérer que l'auditeur, de nos jours, se rende compte que le chanteur qui peut couvrir ce volet particulier de la musique vocale est un peu une rareté, historiquement parlant. Très peu de chanteurs peuvent être considérés comme caractéristiques de ce type de voix.

Une subtile ironie, pour les lecteurs britanniques du moins, peut émaner alors de

la constatation que, dans une conception chronologique, le récital commence par un solo du *Messiah* (*Messie*) de Haendel. Pendant deux siècles et plus, le *Messiah* fut en Grande-Bretagne une manne musicale, la définition même, par l'exemple, de ce qui est "typique", sans aucune nuance exotique. Mais le point intéressant est que cette œuvre, dans un contexte plus large, est justement atypique: il s'agit presque d'une excentricité nationale. Car en dépit de ce qui a été conçu comme sa "saine simplicité", le *Messiah* est un chef-d'œuvre de la main d'un maître du baroque. Parallèlement en effet aux éléments d'une franche simplicité (simplicité assimilée, telle était la tendance à l'époque victorienne, à de la sincérité), il y en a au moins autant dans lesquels la ligne vocale, pour solistes et chœur, éclate en une série de traits tout en fioritures, dans le style de ce qui est généralement conçu comme le monopole de la soprano coloratura.

La première voix entendue dans l'oratorio est celle du ténor solo. Son récitatif accompagné "Comfort ye my people" (page 1) est un morceau merveilleusement imaginaire, son degré de "simplicité" dépendant, lors de son interprétation, de l'idée que se font l'éditeur, le chanteur et le chef d'orchestre de la question de l'ornementation.

Les conceptions varient, par exemple, au sujet de la manière d'exécuter la longue note tenue sur "comfort": au dix-neuvième siècle et à l'aube du vingtième, sa simplicité littérale était considérée comme naturelle, puis dans les années 1950 et '60, la pratique de l'ornementation gagna du terrain pour céder la place plus tard à un compromis modéré. Mais au sujet du caractère baroque de l'aria qui suit "Ev'ry valley shall be exalted" (page 2), il n'y a pas de discussion possible. Les premières phrases sont simples et dépourvues d'ornementation, mais bientôt la voix s'engage sur une piste où rapidité et agilité sont confrontés aux défis supplémentaires d'un changement de mesure syncopé et de grand amplitude. Le style de l'aria "Rejoice greatly" (page 14) qui suit le chœur des anges entendu par les bergers au temps de la naissance du Christ lui est comparable. L'aria tel qu'il apparaît ici est un arrangement de Mozart, chanté par un ténor plutôt que par la soprano de Haendel.

Le ténor favori de Haendel était John Beard qui participa à de nombreuses exécutions du *Messiah* et créa les rôles-titres dans *Samson*, *Judas Macchabée* et *Jephtha*. L'écriture ici requiert une voix bien entraînée, sans aucun doute, mais il semble que dans chacun des

rôles, le compositeur avait moins à l'esprit l'agilité et la virtuosité technique du chanteur que son expressivité, sa profondeur et sa puissance. C'est dans ces rôles non-opératiques que la voix du ténor franchit une étape décisive vers ce que nous pourrions considérer comme de la modernité et prend la place centrale occupée jusqu'alors par les voix de castrats. Beard, notons-le aussi, survécut à Haendel et mourut en 1791, l'année où vit le jour *Così fan tutte* de Mozart.

En termes d'années si pas de style, l'époque de Haendel et celle de Mozart nous semblent plus éloignées l'une de l'autre qu'elles ne le sont réellement. Beard aurait entendu parler du jeune Mozart lorsqu'il joua à Londres. A son tour, le ténor particulièrement associé à Mozart à l'âge mûr, Anton Raaf, fit ses débuts dès 1736, six ans avant que Haendel n'écrive son *Messiah*. Ce fut pour Raaf, qui avait alors 67 ans, que Mozart écrivit le rôle-titre d'*Idoménée* dont certains aspects de l'identité musicale et morale survivent aussi dans la personnalité du héros magnanime de *The Clemency of Titus*. Les deux arias qui figurent au programme de ce récital rappellent Haendel par leur forme musicale en ce qu'ils s'éloignent du style baroque, ornementé, et vont dans le sens d'une expressivité plus limpide, sans

fioritures. D'une manière générale, les deux solos sont philosophiques: le premier, l'aria de l'Acte I ("The true sublime enjoyment", page 6), exprime la foi de l'Empereur en un gouvernement bienveillant, le second ("If this empire", page 4), sa décision de mettre ses principes en pratique, au point même de sauver la vie d'un traître.

Le rôle de Ferrando dans *Così fan tutte* (*Ainsi font-elles toutes*) est plus proche de la conception habituelle du ténor lyrique. Dans un aria ("Her beauty's a wonder", page 3) dont la ligne vocale s'équilibre harmonieusement au fil d'une mélodie qui ne lui fait jamais dépasser le "la" naturel tout en se situant dans le registre aigu, le jeune homme amoureux tisse, avec autant d'aisance et de naturel que s'il respirait, des phrases d'une beauté délicate. L'autre solo ("All my thoughts are in turmoil" – "Betrayed me... Abused me...", page 5), exprimant la fureur née de la conviction d'avoir été trahi, développe un style vocal différent, plus proche de la passion des ténors de Verdi qui s'exprime en un langage déclamatoire culminant dans son *Otello*.

Mais avant l'*Otello* de Verdi, celui de Rossini vit le jour. Le passage qui suit ("It is certain: she wrote this letter...", page 10) correspond au duo du Serment dans Verdi et au climax de la

scène de la “tentation” dans Shakespeare. Iago, trompant Othello en lui faisant croire que sa femme est perfide, triomphe, tandis qu’Othello jure de se venger. Dans cette version, toutefois, Iago est un autre ténor, dont la qualité doit mettre en relief le caractère plus profond, plus noble du Maure. Le style est orné encore, mais le timbre est héroïque. D’une manière assez similaire, dans *Zelmira*, Antenore qui est farouchement ambitieux requiert la gravité d’un ténor dramatique, mais aussi la flexibilité associée à la voix lyrique dans ce qu’elle a de plus léger. Dans son aria ici, (“What is this, companions”, page [12]) au début de l’opéra, il semble déplorer la mort de roi guerrier Azor qui a en fait été tué par Leucippo, un partisan d’Antenore, afin d’aider son maître à accéder au trône. Le trio d’*Armida* (“I lost the will to action”, page [7]), assez étonnamment, s’adresse tout entier à des ténors, l’intérêt se portant surtout sur le croisé-héros Rinaldo qui a été scandaleusement victime des artifices de la sorcière Armida. Le rôle de Rinaldo, comme celui d’Antenore et d’Othello, fut chanté à l’origine par Nozzari, et les trois extraits donnent ensemble une idée de ses extraordinaires qualités vocales, ainsi que de la virtuosité, de la puissance et de l’expressivité qui ont fait sa renommée.

L’autre ténor qu’affectionnait Rossini était Manuel Garcia, le premier Comte Almaviva dans *The Barber of Seville*. Sa sérénade (“My poor heart is so full of emotion”, page [8]) exige de la part du chanteur un lyrisme d’une grande pureté. Le solo de la *Petite Messe solennelle* (“Lord God almighty”, page [9]) par contre, est écrit dans un style vigoureux, héroïque même. Dans un de ses derniers enregistrements, le grand ténor Caruso montra avec brio, mais trop manifestement, quelle genre de signification ce terme “héroïque” ne devait pas avoir.

Un compositeur qui contribua de manière importante, dans des opéras comme *Le Prophète* et *L’Africaine*, à la faveur dont jouit le ténor héroïque et dramatique fut Meyerbeer. Ces grandes œuvres parisiennes n’avaient pas encore vu le jour quand, en 1824, *The Crusader in Egypt* fut créé à Venise avec grand succès. C’était là les débuts de Meyerbeer qui, travaillant en Italie, subit inévitablement l’influence de Rossini. Le rôle d’Adrian de Montfort, Grand maître des Chevaliers de Rhodes, chanté par le ténor, a essentiellement un caractère lyrique, mais il est néanmoins exigeant. La prière reprise dans cet enregistrement (“Death’s unrelenting call”, page [13]) apparaît assez tard dans l’opéra,

lorsque le Sultan a fait emprisonner Adrian et ses chevaliers qui, dans cet hymne, se préparent à la mort – cela s’avérera inutile, car les opéras à cette époque n’étaient pas supposés se terminer tristement, et leur libération est proche.

L’aria de *Benvenuto Cellini* dans l’opéra de Berlioz (“My life to art I dedicated”, page [11]) est aussi un épisode lyrique dans ce qui est, en somme, un rôle résolument exigeant. Ici, le lyrisme gagne en intensité vers la fin de la pièce et le chanteur est incité à donner le meilleur de lui-même. Le grand sculpteur, à ce point de sa carrière, est tombé amoureux de la fille du Trésorier du pape, Teresa, et sa passion est si ardente qu’elle lui semble importer plus que son art – qui sera néanmoins son salut dans ce qui est une autre heureuse issue obtenue périlleusement dans une situation difficile. Les exécutions de l’œuvre sont rares, tout comme le sont les ténors pour interpréter le rôle-titre. Le triomphe de Gedda à Covent Garden et ailleurs renforce l’idée émise antérieurement qu’il est celui, s’il en est dans sa génération, qui s’approche le plus du type de voix que Bruce Ford incarne à l’heure actuelle.

Quant aux deux bis, peut-être faut-il tout simplement les voir dans l’esprit où ils nous sont offerts. Ce sont des airs de deux

genres très différents de “musical” qui sont dans la meilleure tradition des pièces de ce type – mélodieux, charmants, inattendus et populaires. Il convient sans doute d’ajouter que “My heart and I” (page [15]) évoque la mémoire d’un autre ténor. Richard Tauber était un chanteur plein de lyrisme et doté de talents variés qui auraient pu l’amener à un répertoire aussi ambitieux que celui-ci; il était aussi compositeur et chef d’orchestre. Il produisit son opérette *Old Chelsea* à Londres pendant les jours les plus sombres de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et en chanta le rôle principal plus de 700 fois. En 1947, il tomba malade et après une dernière apparition dans *Don Giovanni* à Covent Garden, il décéda au début de l’année suivante. C’est un artiste qui réalisa de très nombreux enregistrements; sa discographie comporte 735 références. “Oh, what a beautiful mornin’” (page [16]), qui porte le numéro 733, était le succès de la nouvelle œuvre très populaire *Oklahoma!*

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Traduction: Marie-Françoise de Meeûs

Le ténor américain **Bruce Ford** est sans conteste l’un des chanteurs les plus remarquables de notre temps. On ne tarit pas

d'éloges sur la beauté et l'étendue de sa voix, la façon dont il vit un texte, sa maîtrise stylistique et sa virtuosité technique ainsi que ses talents d'acteur. Il est invité régulièrement à se produire dans les plus grands théâtres d'Amérique du Nord et d'Europe, où il se spécialise dans les œuvres les plus difficiles de Mozart et du répertoire *bel canto*. Depuis plus de dix ans, Bruce Ford joue un rôle majeur dans la revalorisation de nombreux opéras *bel canto*, autant au disque qu'en concert. Bien des théâtres ont repris exprès pour lui des opéras jusque-là négligés à tort, entre autres The Royal Opera (l'*Otello* de Rossini) ainsi que les festivals de Glyndebourne (*Ermione*) et Pesaro (Zelmira et l'*Otello* de Rossini). Il a également chanté à La Scala, dans les théâtres lyriques de Naples, Florence et Bologne ainsi que dans le cadre du Mai Musical de Florence et du Festival de Salzbourg. C'est en tant qu'Almaviva dans le Barbier de Séville – le rôle qu'il a le plus souvent interprété dans sa carrière à ce jour – qu'il a fait ses débuts au Royal Opera, au Metropolitan Opera, au Los Angeles Opera ainsi qu'au Dallas Opera.

En concert, il s'est produit dans des lieux aussi prestigieux que La Scala, Carnegie Hall et le Concertgebouw d'Amsterdam ainsi que dans le cadre du Festival d'Edimbourg. Il est

très demandé comme récitaliste. Il a travaillé avec de nombreux chefs d'orchestre dont Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Bonyngue, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Colin Davis et David Parry, pour n'en citer que quelques-uns.

Bruce Ford a confié une grande partie de son répertoire au disque. On notera entre autres la version originale de Lucia di Lammermoor sous Sir Charles Mackerras, trois récitals d'airs d'opéra en soliste ("Héros romantiques" et "Rossini sérieux" pour Opera Rara ainsi que "Grands Airs d'opéra" pour Chandos en association avec la fondation Peter Moores), et les enregistrements pour Opera Rara d'opéras rares de Mayr, Donizetti, Pacini et Rossini, enregistrements fort prisés par la critique. Ses interprétations superbes de héros mozartiens, Mitridate (The Royal Opera) et Oreste dans *Ermione* (à Glyndebourne) sont disponibles sur vidéo/DVD. Malgré ses quelque vingt ans de scène, son répertoire du ténor ne cesse de s'élargir et il vient d'ajouter à sa discographie le rôle-titre de *La Clémence de Titus* et celui d'*Idoménée* de Mozart.

Avec son disque d'airs d'opérettes, Ford saisit l'occasion de revivre ses débuts en Allemagne, lorsqu'il chanta dans plusieurs des œuvres évoquées.

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 *The Thieving Magpie*, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *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.

Grandi arie operistiche

Ciascun disco di questa serie di recital solistici presenta, in primo luogo, un artista originale, un interprete scelto per i suoi meriti e con qualità che più pienamente apprezzabili se illustrate in una sequenza in brani tratti da un vasto repertorio anziché soltanto parzialmente nel contesto di un'intera opera. Ma l'esperimento non si ferma qui. Ogni cantante rappresenta, a sua volta, un tipo di voce particolare, per esempio il soprano di coloratura, il baritono lirico o il basso drammatico. A ciascun tipo si accompagna il repertorio adeguato e un altro aspetto del progetto è quello di esplorarlo e illustrarlo. Questo è il secondo disco di grandi arie operistiche di Bruce Ford. (Bruce Ford ha registrato anche un disco di brani di operette viennesi, CHAN 3088.) Il primo disco di grandi arie operistiche (CHAN 3006) ha presentato il tenore lirico in un programma "centrale", con arie famose quali "Where'er you walk" di Handel, "I saw the tear" ("Una furtiva lagrima") di Donizetti, la serenata tratta da *La Jolie Fille de Perth* di Bizet e il canto indù da *Sadko* di Rimskij-Korsakov. Questo è il repertorio del tenore di grazia di qualche

generazione fa, come Tito Schipa, Heddle Nash o Léopold Simoneau. Nel questo secondo disco il tipo è più difficile da definire.

Chi conosce bene la sua arte potrebbe esitare a collocare Bruce Ford accanto agli illustri tenori lirici citati sopra e questo non vuole sminuire né l'uno né gli altri. Ford appartiene alla nostra epoca: oggi si è sviluppata una competenza particolare nella musica fiorita che fino a qualche tempo fa era ritenuta impossibile da cantare dai tempi dei virtuosi per cui era stata composta. Ne sono un esempio le parti per tenore nelle opere di Rossini. Il recital precedente di Ford si concludeva con l'aria "Finish this futile argument" ("Cessa di più resistere"), quasi invariabilmente omessa dalle rappresentazioni o dalle registrazioni del *Barbiere di Siviglia* fino agli ultimi tempi. Il brano faceva già intravedere questo disco, collocandolo storicamente entro una categoria diversa, in quanto nulla di quanto sappiamo sui tenori del passato citati prima, in base a registrazioni o notizie, fa pensare che il loro esercizio della tecnica fiorita comprendesse questo particolare tipo di brillantezza. Questo secondo programma contiene più esempi di tale

stile, ma amplia maggiormente la portata del repertorio.

Uno dei brani rossiniani riuniti nella registrazione è tratto dall'*Otello*; per questo ruolo è necessario un tenore che, pur avendo la flessibilità e la gamma alta di Almaviva nel *Barbiere* deve sfoggiare anche un tono più scuro, più corposo, più vicino a quello del moderno tenore eroico. La parte fu scritta per Manuel Garcia, cantata per la prima volta da Andreas Nozzari, poi divenne uno dei brani preferiti di Gilbert Duprez. Nozzari aveva una voce potente con un'estensione di due ottave e mezza, dal la basso fino al re alto. Si dice che Duprez avesse sconvolto le aspettative legate al tenore drammatico, lasciando di stucco il suo pubblico con note alte fino al do di petto. Era anche famoso per la voce mista, di colore oscuro, per la declamazione appassionata e, per dirla con un osservatore, per la sua voce di "metallo fuso". Tra le numerose prime mondiali da lui interpretate ricordiamo il *Benvenuto Cellini* di Berlioz; il suo canto d'amore è un altro brano presente in questo programma, e presenta al tenore lirico un modo di cantare all'altezza del ruolo più robusto assegnato all'orchestra.

Quando si parla di "tipo di voce" si presuppone l'esistenza, nel corso degli anni, di

una serie di cantanti appartenenti alla categoria. E le cose non sono molto facili. Lasciando da parte la generazione presente (che conta molti più specialisti rossiniani rispetto al passato), il nome che ritorna alla mente con più probabilità è quello di Nicolai Gedda. Durante la sua stagione d'oro aveva la tradizionale dolcezza del tenore lirico e, soprattutto nei primi tempi, una straordinaria leggerezza. La sua voce estremamente allenata aveva una notevole estensione e la sua profonda musicalità e le sue capacità linguistiche lo aiutarono ad essere padrone di un vasto repertorio. Oppure può essere necessario arrivare al tenore virtuoso russo Ivan Kozlovsky o tornare indietro alla prima scuola francese e all'eternamente affascinante Fernando De Lucia. In ogni caso è giusto che gli ascoltatori di oggi si rendano conto del carattere storicamente raro del cantante che abbraccia questo campo musicale particolare. Questo è un tipo di voce che appartiene a pochissimi.

Una delicata ironia, almeno per i lettori britannici, può essere legata al fatto che, dal punto di vista cronologico, il recital si apra con un brano solistico tratto dal *Messiah* di Handel. Da oltre due secoli il *Messiah* in Gran Bretagna è pane e companatico musicale, la

definizione per eccellenza del “tipico”, per nulla esotico. La cosa più interessante è che in un contesto più ampio proprio questo è atipico, quasi un’eccentricità nazionale. Perché, nonostante la sua cosiddetta “sana semplicità”, il *Messiah* è anche il capolavoro di un maestro del barocco. Per ogni elemento chiaro e semplice (che per i Vittoriani corrispondeva alla sincerità) ne esistono altrettanti in cui la riga del canto, per il coro come per i solisti, si spezza in sequenze di volate fiorite del tipo generalmente considerato monopolio del soprano di coloratura.

La prima voce che si sente nell’oratorio è quella del tenore solista. Il suo recitativo accompagnato, “Comfort ye my people” (traccia [1]), è una composizione meravigliosamente creativa; il grado della sua “semplicità” di esecuzione dipende dal punto di vista del curatore, cantante e direttore per quanto riguarda la questione degli abbellimenti. Le idee variano, per esempio, sull’esecuzione della lunga nota tenuta di “comfort”; nel XIX secolo e all’inizio del XX secolo la sua semplicità letterale è stata data per scontata, mentre la pratica dell’abbellimento ha preso terreno negli anni ’50 e ’60, prima di ritornare a un moderato compromesso. Ma sul carattere barocco

dell’aria che segue (“Ev’ry valley shall be exalted”, traccia [2]) non esistono dubbi. Le frasi iniziali sono semplici e disadorne, ma ben presto la voce si lancia su una pista in cui velocità e agilità incontrano le difficoltà di un lungo salto e un cambiamento sincopato di passo. Paragonabile per lo stile è l’aria “Rejoice greatly” (traccia [14]) che segue il coro angelico che annuncia ai pastori la nascita di Gesù Cristo. L’aria compare qui nell’arrangiamento di Mozart, che prevede l’interpretazione di un tenore al posto del soprano di Handel.

Il tenore inglese preferito di Handel fu John Beard, che interpretò molte volte il *Messiah* e creò i ruoli di protagonista in *Samson*, *Judas Maccabeus* e *Jephtha*. La scrittura qui richiede una voce ben allenata, sicuramente, ma in ciascun oratorio sembra che il compositore non pensasse tanto all’agilità e alla brillantezza tecnica del cantante, ma piuttosto alla sua espressività, profondità e potenza. È in questi ruoli non drammatici che la voce del tenore compie un passo decisivo verso la nostra “modernità”, oltre ad occupare la posizione centrale che avevano a quell’epoca i castrati. Beard, possiamo aggiungere, sopravvisse a Handel e morì nel 1791, anno in cui Mozart compose *Così fan tutte*.

L’era di Handel e quella di Mozart ci sembrano più distanti tra loro di quanto non fossero realmente, in termini di anni se non di stile. Probabilmente Beard sentì parlare del giovane Mozart quando si esibiva a Londra. A sua volta, il tenore particolarmente associato con il Mozart maturo, Anton Raaf, esordiva già nel 1736, sei anni prima della composizione del *Messiah*. Fu per Raaf, all’epoca sessantasettenne, che Mozart scrisse la parte di *Idomeneo*, e qualcosa della sua identità morale e musicale sopravvive anche nel magnanimo eroe nella *Clemency of Titus*. Entrambe le arie incluse in questo recital si ricollegano a Handel per forma musicale, ma si allontanano ancora dallo stile barocco, ornamentale per avviarsi verso un’espressività più semplice, priva di orpelli. In senso lato, si tratta di due brani filosofici. Nell’aria del primo atto “The true sublime enjoyment” (“Del più sublime soglio”, traccia [6]) l’imperatore dichiara di credere in un governo benevolo, nell’altra “If this empire” (“Se all’impero”, traccia [4]) esprime la decisione di mettere in pratica i propri principi, fino al punto di risparmiare la vita di un traditore.

Più vicino alla nozione generale del tenore lirico è il ruolo di Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*.

Qui abbiamo il giovane innamorato, con un rigo “Her beauty’s a wonder” (“Un’aura amorosa”, traccia [3]) elegantemente equilibrato su una melodia che non lo porta mai oltre il la naturale, ma si mantiene alta, con frasi di delicata bellezza che debbono sembrare facili e naturali come il respiro. L’altro assolo “All my thoughts are in turmoil” – “Betrayed me... Abused me...” (“Tradito, schernito”, traccia [5]) sviluppa uno stile vocale diverso, più simile alla passione dei tenori verdiani in una linea declamatoria che culmina nel suo *Otello*.

Ma prima dell’*Otello* di Verdi viene quello di Rossini. Il brano che ascoltiamo adesso “It is certain: she wrote this letter” (“Non m’inganno”, traccia [10]) corrisponde al duetto del Giuramento in Verdi e al momento culminante della scena della “tentazione” in Shakespeare. Dopo essere riuscito con l’inganno a convincere Otello dell’infedeltà di sua moglie, Iago trionfa mentre Otello giura vendetta. In questa versione, però, anche Iago è un tenore, e la sua qualità deve dare risalto al carattere più profondo e nobile del Moro. Lo stile è sempre fiorito, ma il timbro è eroico. In maniera alquanto simile, l’estrema ambizione di Antenore in *Zelmira* richiede il peso di un tenore drammatico, pur esigendo la flessibilità

associata alla voce lirica, più leggera. La sua aria tratta dall'inizio dell'opera "What is this, companions" ("Che vidi amici", traccia [12]) sembra lamentare la morte del re guerriero, Azor, che in realtà è stato ucciso da Leucippo, sicario di Antenore, per aiutare il suo padrone a conquistare il trono. Il trio dell'**Armida** "I lost the will to action" ("In quale aspetto imbecille", traccia [7]) è, eccezionalmente, scritto interamente per tenori, ma si incentra sull'eroe crociato Rinaldo, vergognosamente caduto preda delle arti della maga Armida. Il ruolo di Rinaldo, come quelli di Antenore e Otello, fu interpretato originariamente da Nozzari e i tre brani insieme danno un'idea delle straordinarie qualità vocali, virtuosistiche, della potenza e dell'espressività per cui il cantante era famoso.

L'altro tenore preferito di Rossini fu Manuel Garcia, il primo Almaviva nel **Barber of Seville**. La sua serenata "My poor heart is so full of emotion" ("Se il mio nome", traccia [8]) richiede lirismo puro nel cantante. L'assolo dalla **Petite Messe solennelle**, ("Lord God almighty", traccia [9]) per contro, è vivace, persino eroico. In una delle sue ultime registrazioni il grande Caruso dimostrò magnificamente ma anche troppo chiaramente uno dei significati meno graditi del termine "eroico".

Un compositore che diede un importante contributo allo sviluppo del tenore eroico o drammatico, in opere come *Le Prophète* e *L'Africaine*, fu Meyerbeer. Le grandi opere parigine erano ancora di là da venire nel 1824, anno della riuscita prima del **Crusader in Egypt** a Venezia. Erano i primi tempi e Meyerbeer, che lavorava in Italia, risentì inevitabilmente dell'influenza di Rossini. Il ruolo tenorile di Adriano di Montfort, Gran Maestro dei Cavalieri di Rodi, è essenzialmente lirico, ma sempre difficile. La preghiera registrata qui "Death's unrelenting call" ("Suono funerea", traccia [13]) arriva tardi nell'opera, quando il Sultano ha imprigionato Adriano e i suoi cavalieri che, in quest'inno, si preparano alla morte. Non sarà necessario: secondo il lieto fine obbligatorio nelle opere di questo periodo, la liberazione è vicina.

L'aria di **Benvenuto Cellini** nell'opera di Berlioz ("My life to art I dedicated", traccia [14]) analogamente è un episodio lirico in quello che è un ruolo decisamente sfiante. Persino qui le note alte si intensificano alla fine dei versi, mettendo a dura prova la tempra del cantante. Il grande scultore si è innamorato della figlia del tesoriere del Papa, Teresa, e la sua passione è così ardente da sembrargli più

importante della sua arte, che sarà nondimeno la sua salvezza in un altro lieto fine operistico che lo trae pericolosamente d'impaccio. Le rappresentazioni di quest'opera sono rare come i tenori interpreti del ruolo di protagonista. Il trionfo di Gedda al Covent Garden e altrove rafforza l'ipotesi avanzata in precedenza che sia lui, più di ogni altro della sua generazione, il più vicino al tipo di voce personificato oggi da Bruce Ford.

Per quanto riguarda i due bis, probabilmente è meglio prenderli nello spirito in cui vengono proposti. I brani di due tipi molto diversi di musical, i bis più tradizionali – melodiosi, deliziosi, inaspettati e di successo. Forse si può aggiungere che "My heart and I" (traccia [15]) ci ricorda un altro tenore. Lirico e versatile, con doni che avrebbero potuto guidarlo a un repertorio intraprendente quanto questo, Richard Tauber fu anche compositore e direttore d'orchestra. Produsse la sua operetta **Old Chelsea** a Londra durante i tempi più bui della seconda Guerra mondiale e cantò il ruolo principale più di 700 volte. Nel 1947 si ammalò e, dopo un'ultima apparizione teatrale al Covent Garden nel *Don Giovanni*, morì all'inizio dell'anno successivo. Fu un prolifico artista per quanto riguarda le incisioni e la sua discografia

riunisce 735 titoli. Il numero 733 fu il successo del musical **Oklahoma!**: "Oh, what a beautiful mornin'" (traccia [16]).

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Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Il tenore americano **Bruce Ford** è considerato uno dei più importanti cantanti di oggi ed è particolarmente apprezzato per la sua voce straordinaria, la sua vivacità, il suo stile sicuro e la sua perizia tecnica, oltre che per la sua recitazione espressiva. È regolarmente ospite dei più importanti teatri del Nordamerica e dell'Europa ed è specializzato nelle opere più difficili del repertorio mozartiano e del belcanto. Da oltre dieci anni svolge un ruolo significativo nella rivalutazione di molte opere del belcanto, attraverso registrazioni e rappresentazioni dal vivo. Molti teatri hanno riproposto proprio per lui delle opere meno note, per esempio la Royal Opera (*Otello* di Rossini) e i festival di Glyndebourne (*Ermione* e Pesaro (*Zelmira*, *Otello* di Rossini)). È comparso alla Scala e nei teatri lirici di Napoli, Firenze e Bologna ed è intervenuto al Maggio Musicale Fiorentino e al festival di Salisburgo. Il suo esordio è legato al ruolo del conte di Almaviva nel *Barbiere di Siviglia* – quello da

lui più spesso interpretato in seguito – alla Royal Opera, Metropolitan Opera e nei teatri lirici di Los Angeles e Dallas.

L'attività concertistica di Bruce Ford lo ha visto comparire alla Scala, al festival di Edimburgo, al Carnegie Hall e al Concertgebouw di Amsterdam, e i suoi recital sono molto richiesti. Ha lavorato, tra l'altro, con Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, sir Charles Mackerras, Richard Bonynghe, sir Roger Norrington, sir Colin Davis e David Parry.

Bruce Ford ha registrato gran parte del suo repertorio e la sua discografia include la versione originale della *Lucia di Lammermoor* diretta da sir Charles Mackerras, tre recital operistici da solista (Romantic Heroes e Serious Rossini per Opera Rara e Great Operatic Arias per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation). Inoltre ha partecipato a diverse registrazioni di opere dimenticate di Mayr, Donizetti, Pacini e Rossini per Opera rara, molto apprezzate dalla critica. Le splendide interpretazioni del *Mitridate* di Mozart (Royal Opera) e Oreste in *Ermione* (Glyndebourne) sono disponibili su video/DVD. Dopo quasi vent'anni di carriera teatrale, il suo repertorio continua ad ampliarsi; le ultime aggiunte sono i ruoli di

protagonista di due opere mozartiane, *La clemenza di Tito* e *Idomeneo*.

La registrazione di arie da operetta ha rappresentato per Bruce Ford un modo per ricordare gli inizi della sua carriera in Germania, dove è stato interprete di molte delle opere registrate.

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 tournée della *Carmen* e in Messico con la UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Recenti nuove produzioni da lui dirette comprendono il *Fidelio* al Festival della Nuova Zelanda, *Lucia di Lammermoor* alla New Israeli Opera e *Don Giovanni* alla Staatsoper di Hannover.

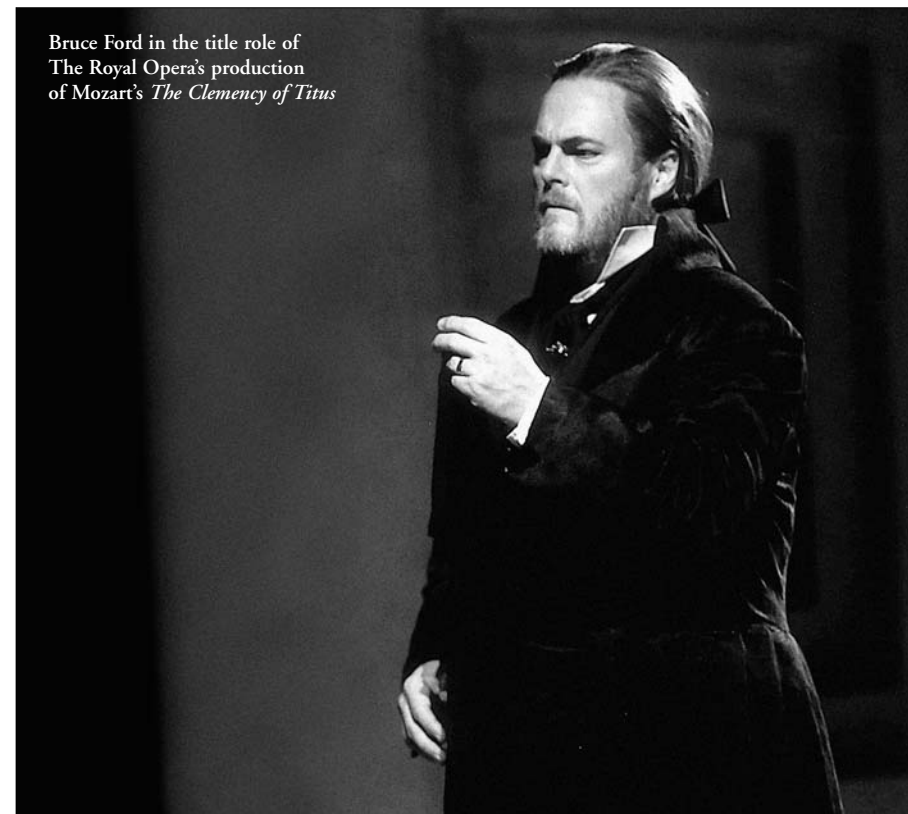
Il suo lavoro in studio di registrazione comprende la produzione della BBC di *Der Vampyr* di Marschner nonché ventotto registrazioni operistiche complete con il

patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation. Tra questi vi sono numerosi dischi per l'etichetta Opera Rara che hanno vinto 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 *The Thieving Magpie*, *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.



Session photo: Bruce Ford with
David Parry

© Russell Duncan



Bruce Ford in the title role of
The Royal Opera's production
of Mozart's *The Clemency of Titus*

© Bill Cooper

from Messiah

Recitative and Aria

Recitative

- [1] Comfort ye my people, saith your God.
 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,
 and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplish'd,
 that her iniquity is pardon'd.
 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness,
 prepare ye the way of the Lord,
 make straight in the desert
 a highway for your God.

Aria

- [2] Ev'ry valley shall be exalted,
 and ev'ry mountain and hill made low:
 the crooked straight and the rough places plain.
*compiled Jennens,
 from the Bible and Prayer Book Psalter*

from Così fan tutte

Ferrando's Aria

Ferrando

- [3] Her beauty's a wonder,
 her presence restores me,
 and when she is near
 my joy is complete.
 The heart love has nourished
 will never feel hunger.
 I pine for her favour
 and fall at her feet.

*Lorenzo da Ponte,
 translation by Anne Ridler, © Anne Ridler Estate*

from The Clemency of Titus

Titus's Aria

Titus

- [4] If this empire, O mighty powers,
 needs a ruler who rules by harshness,
 take my sceptre, at once depose me,
 or give me another heart.
 If this empire, mighty powers,
 must be ruled by fear and harshness,
 take my sceptre, at once depose me,
 or give me another heart.
 I can only rule by mildness,
 with the love of all my people:
 in a reign of fear and terror
 I can never play a part.

*C. Mazzolà after Metastasio,
 translation by Andrew Porter*

from Così fan tutte

Ferrando's Recitative and Cavatina

Recitative

Ferrando

- [5] All my thoughts are in turmoil: such a contempt
 for my affection bewilders and torments me.
 A deception so wicked, this base betrayal leaves
 me helpless, despairing: where can I turn for
 help? Alfonso, Alfonso, how you will laugh! How
 shall I face your mockery? But I will be
 revenged: her lying image I will tear from my
 breast, I swear I'll forget her... I'll forget her?
 But, O God, still my heart strives to forgive her.

Cavatina

Betrayed me... Abused me...
 The vows that she swore...
 But now interceding
 love's voices are pleading,
 I cannot reject her,
 I love her still more.

*Lorenzo da Ponte,
 translation by Anne Ridler, © Anne Ridler Estate*

from The Clemency of Titus

Titus's Aria

Titus

- [6] The true sublime enjoyment,
 all that a ruler cares for!
 All else is mere employment,
 an emp'ror is but a slave.
 Would you deny me the pleasure
 of bringing joy to my people,
 comforting all who suffer,
 rewarding faithful friendship,
 show'ring th'imperial treasure
 on virtue and on the brave?
 My only pleasure!
 My true, sublime enjoyment
 all that a ruler cares for!
 All else is mere employment,
 an emp'ror is but a slave.

*C. Mazzolà after Metastasio,
 translation by Andrew Porter*

from Armida

Trio of Rinaldo, Carlo and Ubaldo

Rinaldo

- [7] I lost the will to action,
 gave way to love's distraction:
 I have become a coward,
 to my unending shame!

Carlo and Ubaldo

He weeps and sighs in anguish,
 for honour's voice is calling.
 Oh, heav'n, do not let him languish:
 restore his glorious name!

*Schmidt after Tasso,
 translation by David Parry*

from The Barber of Seville

Count's Canzone

Count

- [8] My poor heart is so full of emotion,
 I must sing to you of my devotion.
 I am Lindoro, I truly adore you,
 be mine, I implore you,
 my heart's burning for you,
 and Rosina's the one word I say,
 from the dawn to the end of each day.

Your Lindoro sincerely confesses
 that his pedigree scarcely impresses.
 I lay no fortune or title before you,
 I've come here to tell you

I truly adore you,
with a sign of affection I'll stay
from the dawn to the end of each day.

*Sterbini after Beaumarchais' play Le Barbier de Séville,
translation by Amanda and Anthony Holden*

from Petite Messe solennelle

Aria

- [9] Lord God almighty, King of Heaven,
God the Father omnipotent.
Only begotten Son, beloved,
Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Christ, our Saviour.
Grant us Thy mercy,
Lamb of God,
Son of the Father.

translation by David Parry

from Otello

Otello and Iago's Duet

Otello

- [10] It is certain. She wrote this letter...
Faithless wife!... Wrote this letter to my rival!
Every feeling reduced to evil,
I am wracked by grief and shame.

Iago

(Seething jealousy consumes him:
strong and bitter, its fatal poison
undermines the power of reason;
I shall triumph over shame!)

Otello

'My beloved...' How can she write that?

Iago

(He is lost: his eyes reveal it.)

Otello

'Now and always...' I cannot read it...
Full of pain, my heart will burst!

Iago

(Full of joy, my heart will burst!)

Otello

'This lock of hair in token...' Oh, heaven!

Iago

(Anger grows in him, unspoken.)

Otello

Tell me where to find that token!

Iago

Take it! It fills me with disgust!

Otello

Her heart is full of perfidy,
cunning and double-dealing!
So base and so unfeeling,
her actions wrench my aching soul.

Iago

(My heart is full of happiness!
Fate smiles on my concealing,
on that vile woman's welcome fall.)

Otello

What shall I do now?

Iago

Be careful!

Otello

Alas, I cannot...

Iago

Why say that?

Otello

Driven by reckless passion,
I must avenge my woes.

Iago

You are determined?

Otello

I swear it!

Iago

You loved her...

Otello

That is forgotten.

Iago

Believe me, whatever happens
Against your foes I stand.

Otello

Fortune's unbending anger
henceforth I dare defy.
Her death will be my vengeance:
yes, both of us shall die.

Iago

(Fortune's unbending anger
at last I may deny.)
You are determined?

Otello

Yes, I swear it!

Iago

Your love?

Otello

That is forgotten.
Fortune's...etc.

Iago

(Fortune's... etc.
The man I hate will die!)

Otello

Those who hate me?

Iago

I will stand against your foes.

Otello

Yes, both of us shall die.

Iago

(The man I hate will die!)

*F. Berio di Salsa after Shakespeare,
translation by David Parry*

from Benvenuto Cellini

Cellini's Romance

Cellini

[11] One hour to wait now and my lovely Teresa
will be here in the crowd.
One hour, oh God of Love.
Then, if you will,
when lovers all around are joyful,
make mine a joy that's greater still.
Ah, listen to my plea
and my desire fulfil.

My life to art I dedicated,
but from my brow there now has flown
that noble light in heav'n created
which art bestows upon her own.
Glory in art I seek no longer.
Love for Teresa now is stronger.
Oh, god of Love, this I have done for you.
So guard her well and guard me too.

She whom I loved dwelt all serenely,
calm as a stream her days would flow.
Far from the gales that blow so keenly,
peaceful through life I saw her go.
Now all contentment she refuses.
My stormy life she freely chooses.
Oh, god of Love, this she has done for you.
So guard her well and guard me too.

*L. de Wailly and A. Barbier,
translation by Arthur Jacobs,
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from Zelmira

Antenore's Aria

Antenore

[12] What is this, companions, this horror?
There the Prince lies, defiled and bloody!
I weep to see his body...
I tremble at the sight.
I hear your call already,
restless in death, and angry:
but he, who, accursed and hasty,
for sacred blood was hungry
shall follow your brave spirit
to hell's eternal dark night,
shall follow your soul to hell's dark night.

Leucippo

Vengeance is calling you
and we shall trust you:
you, bravest warrior,
henceforth shall rule.

Chorus

Yes, Prince, reign over us!
Yes, we shall trust you
in our extremity, to save us all.

Leucippo

To save us all.

Antenore

Fortune look down on me:
bless my endeavour.
Yes, I go to honour you;
I heed your call.

Leucippo and Chorus

Yes, we shall trust in you
to save us all,
Prince, reign over us:
we trust in you to save us all.

*Tottola after Dormont de Belloy,
translation by David Parry*

from The Crusader in Egypt

Adrian's Prayer

Adrian

[13] Death's unrelenting call
summons Thy warriors:
this life of horrors
shall end at last.

Chorus

Death's call summon's Thy warriors.

Adrian

Incomprehensible, shrouded in mystery,
our own eternity shall hold us fast.

Chorus

Shall hold us fast.

Adrian

Look down, Oh Lord, upon us:
in Thee we place our trust,
in Thee, Oh Lord, we place our trust.

Chorus

In Thee, Oh Lord, we place our trust.
Look down, Oh Lord, in Thee we place our trust.

Adrian

When the last trumpet sounds,
dreadful and constant,
in that same instant,
ah, we shall be dust.

Chorus

The last trumpet...

Adrian

Trembling in agony
the false shall perish;
eternal harmony
waits for the just.

Chorus

Waits for the just.

Adrian and Chorus

Look down, oh Lord, upon us.
Look down on us:
in Thee, Oh Lord, we place our trust.

G. Rossi, translation by David Parry

from Messiah

Aria

[14] Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.
O daughter of Zion, rejoice greatly;
shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:
behold, thy King cometh unto thee.
He is the righteous Saviour,
and he shall speak peace unto the heathen.

*compiled Jennens,
from the Bible and Prayer Book Psalter*

from Old Chelsea

'My heart and I'

¹⁵ We are in love with you
my heart and I.
And we are always true
my heart and I.
When you are far away
each smile's a tear,
but it's a lovely day
when you are near.
Maybe that love is blind
when passion rules
and that my heart and I
are just two fools.
And yet my darling if we ever said 'goodbye'
I know we both should die
my heart and I.

Once in a lifetime, a love-dream comes true,
just once is a lifetime or never.
I met my fate on the day I met you,
the moment I kissed you I knew.

Strange fascination
seems to fill and hold me.
Fateful temptation
such as no one ever told me.
Ev'rything I would endure for you.
Come what may oh, I'd keep smiling through.
My heart is yours, why don't you take it?
It's only asking not to break it.

We are in love with you
my heart and I.
And we are always true
my heart and I.
When you are far away
each smile's a tear,
but it's a lovely day
when you are near.
Maybe that love is blind
when passion rules
and that my heart and I
are just two fools.
And yet my darling if you ever said 'goodbye'
I know we both should die
my heart and I.

*Words by Fred Tysh, music by Richard Tauber.
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London WC2H 0QY*

from Oklahoma!

'Oh, what a beautiful morning'

¹⁶ There's a bright golden haze on the meadow,
there's a bright golden haze on the meadow.
The corn is as high as an elephant's eye,
An' it looks like it's climbin' clear up to the sky!
Oh, what a beautiful mornin', Oh, what a
beautiful day.
I got a beautiful feelin' ev'rythin's goin' my way.

All the cattle are standin' like statues,
all the cattle are standin' like statues.
They don't turn their heads as they see me
ride by,
but a little brown mav'rick is winkin' her eye!
Oh, what a beautiful mornin', Oh, what a
beautiful day.
I got a beautiful feelin' ev'rythin's goin' my way.

All the sounds of the earth are like music,
all the sounds of the earth are like music.
The breeze is so busy, it don't miss a tree:
and an ol' weepin' willer is laughin' at me!
Oh, what a beautiful mornin', Oh, what a
beautiful day.
I got a beautiful feelin' ev'rythin's goin' my way.
Oh, what a beautiful day.

*Words by Oscar Hammerstein II and music
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London WC2H 0QY*

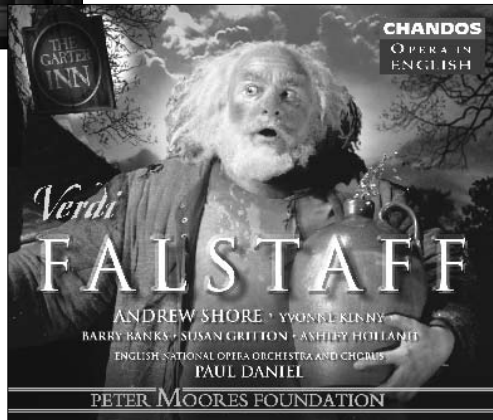


Session photo: Dennis O'Neill, Bruce Ford and Barry Banks

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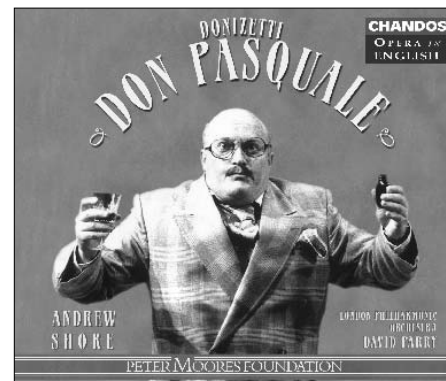


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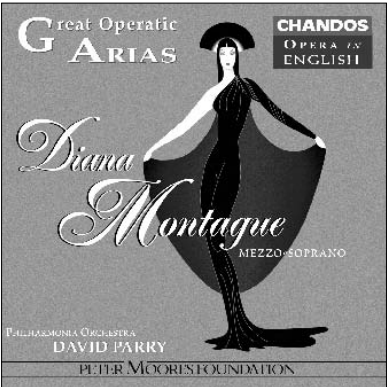


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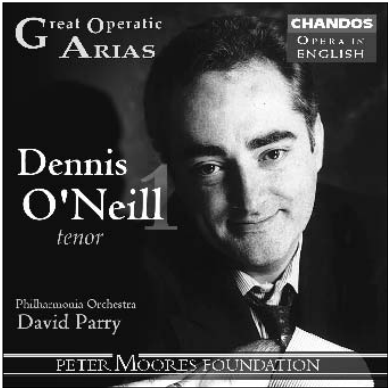
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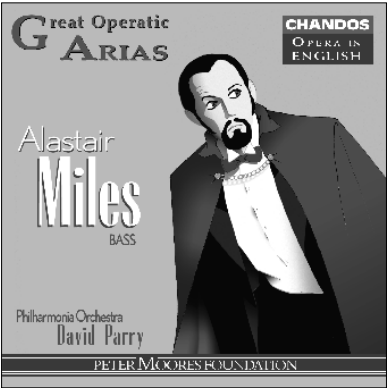
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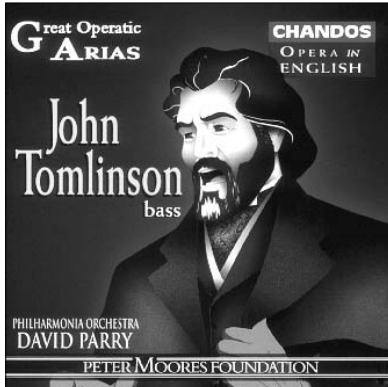


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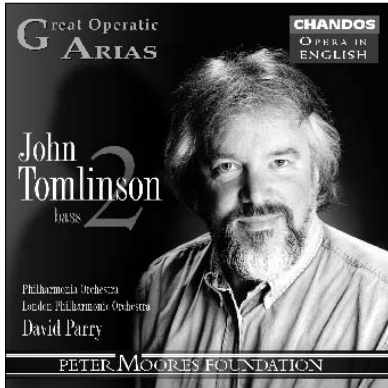
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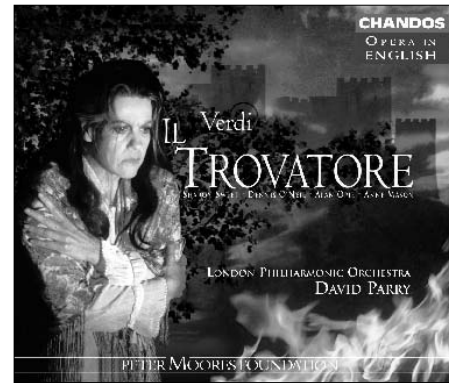


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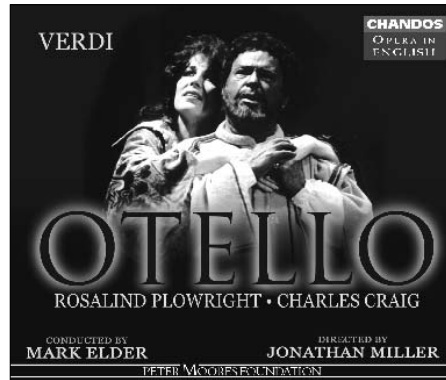
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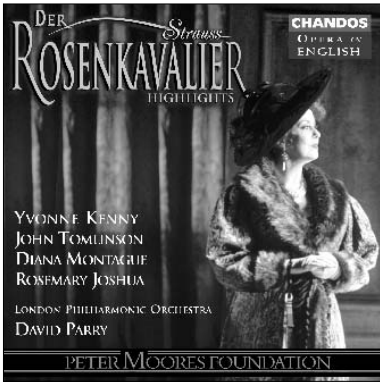
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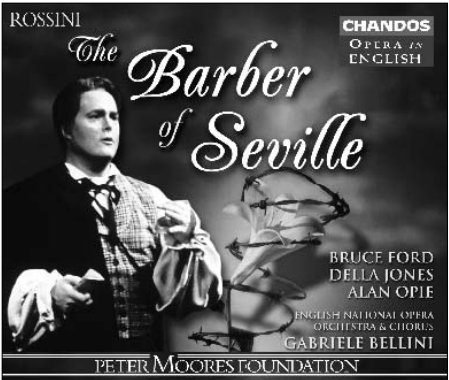


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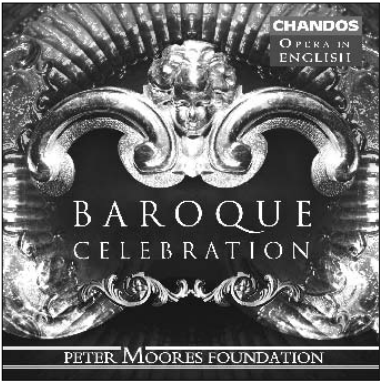
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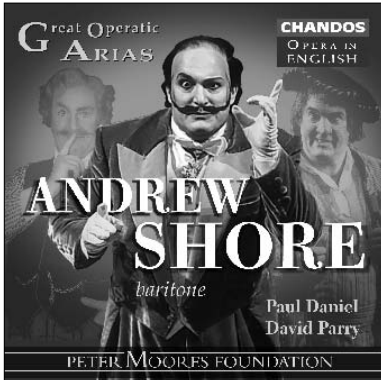


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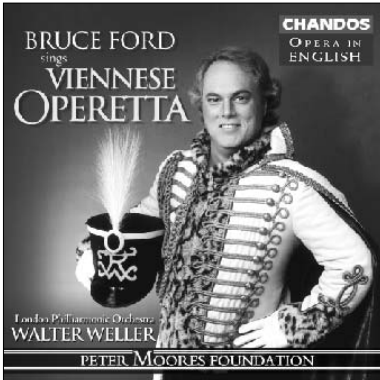


CHAN 3078

Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3077



CHAN 3088



CHAN 3093



CHAN 3072

Opera in English on Chandos

CHAN 3054(3)



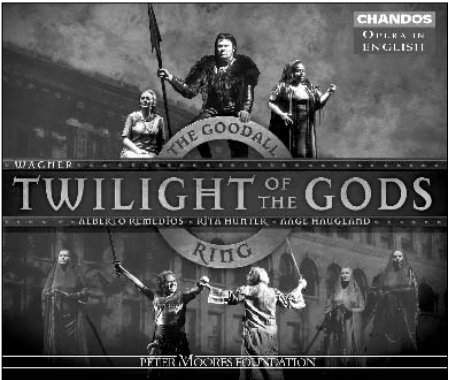
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CHAN 3038(4)



CHAN 3060(5)



Opera in English on Chandos



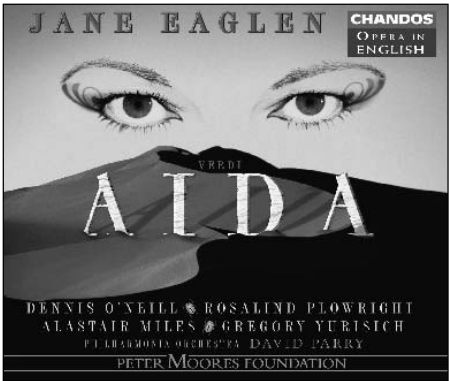
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Opera in English on Chandos

CHAN 3083(2)



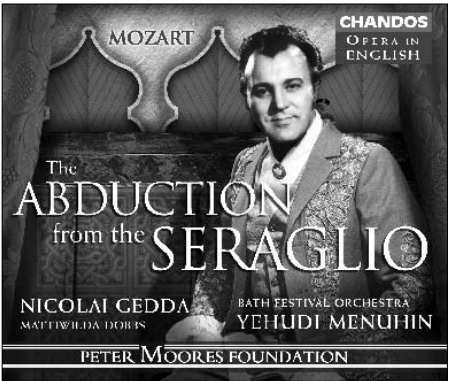
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CHAN 3089(2)



CHAN 3081(2)



Opera in English on Chandos

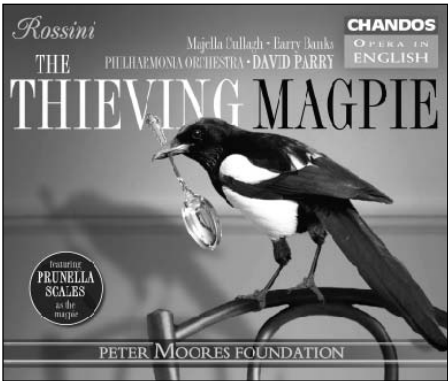
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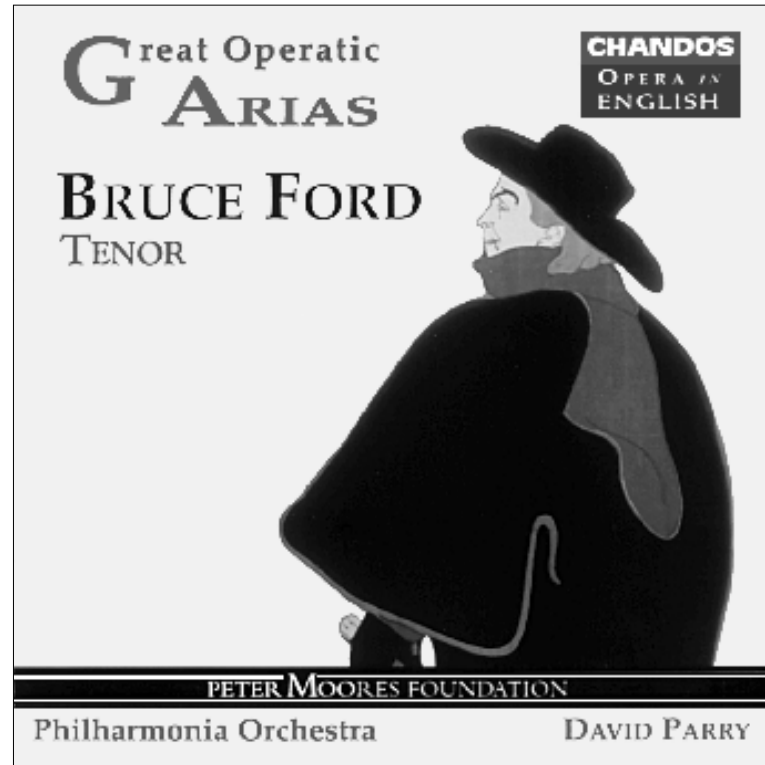
CHAN 3094(2)



CHAN 3097(2)



Opera in English on Chandos



CHAN 3006

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GREAT OPERATIC ARIAS: Bruce Ford 2/Parry

GREAT OPERATIC ARIAS

CHANDOS DIGITAL

CHAN 3100

Bruce FORD 2

George Frideric Handel

from Messiah

1 'Comfort ye my people' – 3:24

2 'Ev'ry valley shall be exalted' 3:31

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

from Così fan tutte (All women are like that)

3 'Her beauty's a wonder' 4:34

from The Clemency of Titus

4 'If this empire' 4:57

from Così fan tutte

5 'All my thoughts are in turmoil' –
'Betrayed me... Abused me' 3:51

from The Clemency of Titus

6 'The true sublime enjoyment' 2:46

Gioachino Rossini

from Armida

7 'I lost the will to action'
with Barry Banks and Dennis O'Neill tenors 3:21

from The Barber of Seville

8 'My poor heart is so full of emotion' 2:47

from Petite Messe solennelle

9 'Lord God almighty' 5:21

from Otello

10 'It is certain. She wrote this letter'
with Paul Nilon tenor 7:19

Hector Berlioz

from Benvenuto Cellini

11 'One hour to wait now' –
'My life to art I dedicated' 5:33

Gioachino Rossini

from Zelmira

12 'What is this, companions?' 6:38
with Toby Stafford-Allen baritone and Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Giacomo Meyerbeer

from The Crusader in Egypt

13 'Death's unrelenting call'
with Geoffrey Mitchell Choir 6:48

George Frideric Handel

from Messiah

14 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion' 4:13

Richard Tauber

from Old Chelsea

15 'My heart and I' 3:53

Richard Rodgers

from Oklahoma!

16 'Oh, what a beautiful mornin'' 2:43
TT 72:53

Bruce Ford tenor

London Philharmonic Orchestra

David Parry

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