

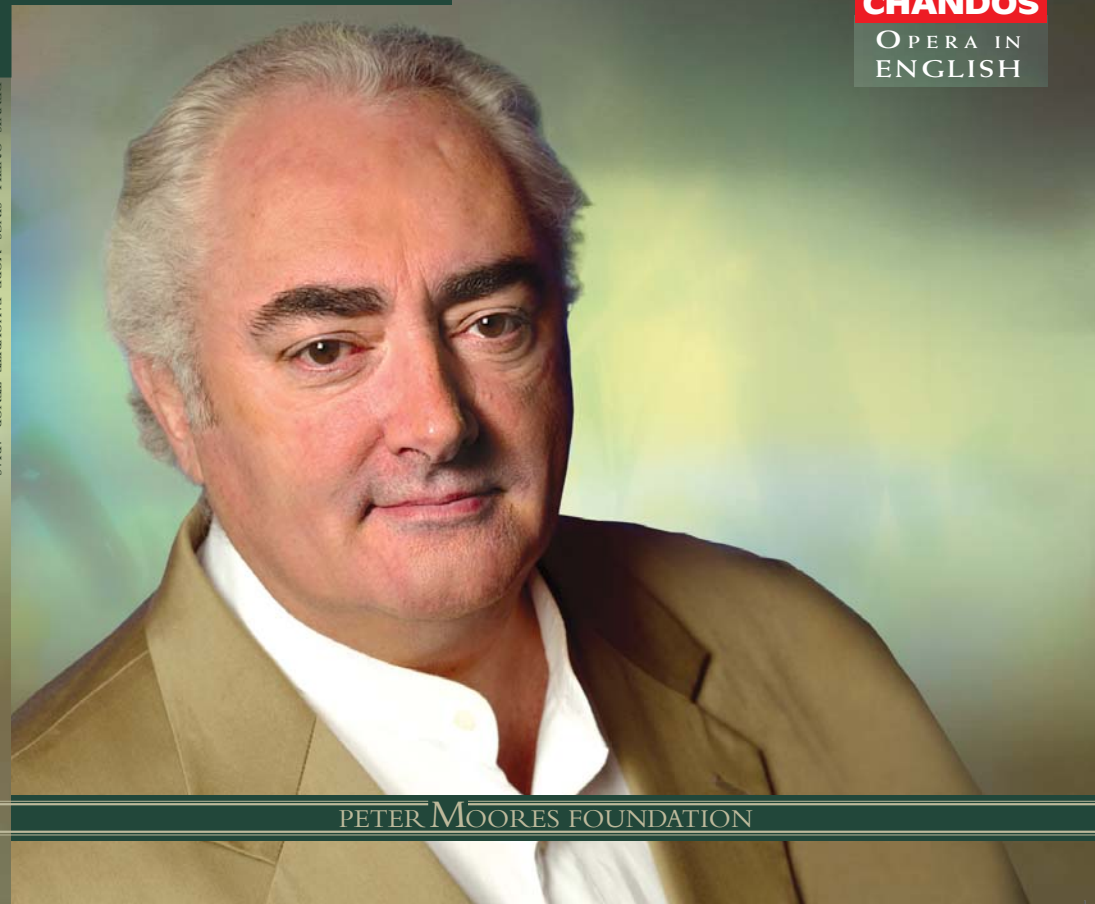
CHAN 3105



GREAT OPERATIC ARIAS
DENNIS O'NEILL SINGS MORE FAVORITE TENOR ARIAS

GREAT OPERATIC ARIAS

CHANDOS
OPERA IN
ENGLISH



PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



Session photo: Dennis O'Neill

Dennis O'Neill **sings** **More Favourite Arias**

Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857–1919)

from Pagliacci (The Touring Company)

Canio's Aria (Vesti la giubba)

[1] 'Go on stage...' –

'Put on your costume'

from CHAN 3003 *Pagliacci*

Time Page

3:48 [p. 52]

Amilcare Ponchielli (1834–1886)

from La Gioconda

Enzo's Aria (Cielo e mar)

[2] 'Heaven and sea!'

5:05 [p. 52]

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

from Aida

Radames' Recitative and Aria (Celeste Aida)

[3] 'I pray that I be chosen' –

'Goddess Aida'

from CHAN 3074(2) *Aida*

4:40 [p. 53]

from Il trovatore (The Troubadour)

Aria and Cabaletta (Ah sì, ben mio – Di quella pira)

[4] 'When holy church has blessed our love' –

'That fierce inferno, her cruel sentence'

8:43 [p. 53]

with Sharon Sweet soprano, Marc Le Brocq tenor and Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

from CHAN 3036(2) *Il trovatore*

from Attila

Trio of Odabella, Foresto and Ezio (Te sol, te sol quest'anima)

[5] 'Foresto, my soul belongs to you'

3:09 [p. 55]

with Janice Watson soprano and Alan Opie baritone

(Gaetano Donizetti) **Matteo Salvi**

from The Duke of Alba

Marcello's Recitative and Aria (Angelo casto e bel)

[6] 'Here, unobserved in this chapel' –

'Angel of love divine!'

6:21 [p. 55]

Umberto Giordano (1867–1948)

from Andrea Chenier

Chenier's Aria (Un dì all'azzurro spazio)

[7] 'One day, gazing at the splendour of Heav'n's blue distance'

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Chenier's Improvviso (Come un bel dì di Maggio)

[8] 'Just like a day in May time'

3:03 [p. 57]

Giuseppe Verdi

from Otello

Otello and Iago's Duet (Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro)

[9] 'Ah! Would that God had given him a thousand lives!' –

'Yes, I swear by skies of marble'

2:58 [p. 57]

with Alan Opie baritone

	Time	Page
Otello's Death (Niun mi tema)		
¹⁰ 'Do not fear me'	5:34	[p. 58]
Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924)		
<i>from Tosca</i>		
Cavaradossi's Recitative and Aria		
¹¹ 'Give me my palette!' –		
'How strange a thing is beauty'	4:04	[p. 58]
with Andrew Shore baritone		
from CHAN 3000(2) <i>Tosca</i>		
<i>from The Girl of the Golden West</i>		
Johnson's Aria (Ch'ella mi creda)		
¹² 'Let her believe that I have gained my freedom'	2:20	[p. 59]
Pietro Mascagni (1863–1945)		
<i>from Cavalleria rusticana</i> (Rustic Chivalry)		
Turiddu's Drinking Song (Brindisi)		
¹³ 'My friends, don't go away' –		
'Neighbours, with a glass I meet you'	2:56	[p. 59]
with Diana Montague mezzo-soprano and Geoffrey Mitchell Choir		
Finale		
¹⁴ 'Mamma, mamma, this new wine really is powerful'	5:56	[p. 60]
with Nelly Miricioiu soprano, Diana Montague mezzo-soprano,		
Elizabeth Bainbridge contralto and Geoffrey Mitchell Choir		
from CHAN 3004 <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i>		

BONUS TRACKS

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)

from Armida

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

¹⁵ 'I lost the will to action' 3:23 [p. 61]

with **Bruce Ford** tenor and **Barry Banks** tenor

from CHAN 3100 *Great Operatic Arias: Bruce Ford 2*

Giacomo Puccini

from La bohème

Rodolfo's Aria (Che gelida manina)

¹⁶ 'Your tiny hand is frozen!' 4:46 [p. 61]

from CHAN 3008(2) *La bohème*

TT 72:52

London Philharmonic Orchestra (tracks 1, 2, 4–10 & 12–15)

Philharmonia Orchestra (tracks 3, 11 & 16)

Gareth Hancock assistant conductor (tracks 2, 5–10, 12 & 15)

David Parry



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Dennis O'Neill in the title role of
The Royal Opera's production
of Verdi's *Otello*



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Dennis O'Neill as Carlo in
The Royal Opera's production
of Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco*

More Favourite Arias

Opera began in Italy at the end of the sixteenth century. It was a deliberate attempt by a group of noblemen in Florence to recreate the world of the ancient Greek tragedies, which they mistakenly believed to have been sung throughout. Italian opera retained its pre-eminence for nearly three centuries: so much so that in nineteenth-century London, operas written in German, French or even English were regularly sung in Italian translation. But if we except the operas by foreigners such as Handel, Gluck and Mozart, there was surely no more glorious period in the history of Italian opera than the one covered on this recording, from Rossini to Puccini. This was the century that saw the disappearance of the male soprano in heroic roles and the emergence, as lover and/or warrior, of the tenor. Since the 1980s, Dennis O'Neill has appeared in this taxing repertory in opera houses all over the world.

Tenors were certainly thick on the ground in Naples, where Rossini's *Armida* was produced in 1817. It was commissioned by the impresario Domenico Barbaia for the opening of the rebuilt San Carlo theatre and it

included six tenor roles, though as two roles were doubled only four singers were required. The part of Rinaldo was taken by Andrea Nozzari, who had starred in Rossini's *Otello* the previous year; Armida was sung by Barbaia's mistress, Isabella Colbran, who was later to become Rossini's first wife.

Based on the epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata* by Torquato Tasso, published in 1581, the story had attracted composers from Monteverdi to Haydn. Armida, a Saracen sorceress, has come to Jerusalem to seduce Rinaldo, leader of the Christian knights embarked on the First Crusade. Near the end of the opera, Carlo and Ubaldo recall the besotted Rinaldo to his senses by showing him his reflection in a shield. The first part of the ensuing trio, 'I lost the will to action' (track 15), is a canon, where each voice has the same music in turn.

Between Rossini's last opera, *William Tell* (1828) and Verdi's first great success, *Nabucco* (1842), the scene was dominated by Donizetti and Bellini. Like Rossini, Donizetti was a master of both comic and serious opera. *The Duke of Alba* was an example of the

latter; or, rather, it would have been if Donizetti had not left it half-finished in 1839. After a controversy in which Ponchielli, the composer of *La Gioconda*, was involved, it was completed by, among others, Donizetti's friend and pupil Matteo Salvi, and performed in Rome in 1882. The libretto had already been used, duly adapted, for Verdi's *Sicilian Vespers* (1855).

The historical Duke of Alba is notorious for his brutal treatment of the Flemish subjects of King Philip II of Spain. In the opera, Marcello of Bruges, who with his lover Amelia is the leader of a rebellion against the Spaniards, is appalled to discover that he is Alba's illegitimate son. 'Angel of love divine!' (track 6), one of Salvi's additions, comes at the beginning of the last Act. Amelia's father, referred to in the introductory recitative, is the patriot Egmont, subject of the play by Goethe to which Beethoven wrote his incidental music.

Verdi's career as a composer of opera lasted over fifty years, from *Oberto* (1839) to *Falstaff* (1893). *Attila* (1846) was commissioned by the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, where *Ernani* had been a great success two years earlier. Besides Attila the Hun, there are three principals: Ezio, a Roman general; Odabella,

daughter of the Lord of Aquileia; and Foresto, an Aquileian knight. Attila has antagonised all three: Ezio, whose dishonourable proposal to combine forces against the Roman emperor he has rejected; Odabella, whose father he has killed in battle; and Foresto, who is Odabella's lover.

When Odabella saves Attila from being poisoned by Foresto, only because she herself wishes to take revenge, Attila vows to marry her. The ensuing complications lead to the trio, 'Foresto, my soul belongs to you' (track 5), after which Attila is indeed stabbed by Odabella. He dies with the equivalent of Julius Caesar's 'Et tu, Brute?' on his lips.

Verdi's next opera for La Fenice was *Rigoletto* (1851). By this time, he was the most celebrated and sought-after opera composer in the world. *Il trovatore* (*The Troubadour*, 1853), based on a play by Antonio García Gutiérrez already used by two other composers, was first produced at the Teatro Apollo in Rome. Set in fifteenth-century Spain, it concerns the rivalry of Manrico and the Count di Luna for the love of Leonora. In 'When holy church has blessed our love' (track 4) Leonora is about to be married to Manrico, the troubadour of the title. Their loving exchanges, as the organ plays in the

adjacent chapel, are rudely interrupted by the news that Azucena, the gypsy whom Manrico believes to be his mother, is to be burnt at the stake. Ever the man of action, Manrico abandons his wedding to fly to her rescue – but not before singing his *cabaletta*, ‘That fierce inferno’, with its famous, albeit uncanonical, top C. The attempt fails: Leonora takes poison and Manrico is executed by the Count, who turns out to be his brother.

As part of the celebrations to mark the opening of the Suez Canal, the Khedive of Egypt built an opera house in Cairo, which opened in 1869 with a performance of *Rigoletto*. Verdi had declined the Khedive’s request for a hymn to inaugurate these celebrations; but after some persuasion he agreed to compose *Aida* (1871), a grand opera with an Egyptian setting, partly perhaps because he was artfully informed that the commission might go to Gounod or Wagner instead.

As in *Il trovatore*, the situation revolves round a love triangle, though here the sexes are reversed. Egypt and Ethiopia are at war: in ‘I pray that I be chosen’ (track [3]), Radames hopes that he will be appointed as commander of the army defending Egypt from the invader; and in ‘Goddess Aida’ he sings of his love for

Aida, a slave of Amneris, the daughter of the King of Egypt.

Radames is victorious and he returns with prisoners, one of whom is Amonasro, the Ethiopian king, who is Aida’s father. Amonasro conceals his identity, and later persuades Aida to trick Radames into revealing the route that his army will take the next day. The plot is overheard: Amonasro is killed, Aida escapes and Radames is arrested. Amneris offers Radames the chance of life if he will only renounce Aida. Radames refuses; at the subsequent trial he keeps silent and is condemned to be buried alive. In the last scene, Aida secretly joins him in the tomb and they die in each other’s arms.

There was a long gap between *Aida* and the premiere of *Otello* in 1887, though the *Requiem* appeared in 1874, and the early 1880s saw Verdi working on revisions to *Simon Boccanegra* and *Don Carlos*. That he composed *Otello* at all is due to the pertinacity and cunning of Giulio Ricordi, his publisher, and Arrigo Boito, who wrote the libretto.

Boito did a masterly job in adapting and compressing the Shakespeare play, and Verdi responded with music that combined old-fashioned set pieces with a new flexibility of

melodic line. The great duet that concludes Act II (track [9]) is a magnificent example of the former. Iago has convinced Otello that Desdemona, his bride, is unfaithful. As the music approaches boiling point, with his threefold shout of ‘blood!’ Otello falls on his knees and launches on ‘Yes, I swear by skies of marble’, with the tune later taken up by Iago rumbling away in the orchestra.

In Act IV, Otello smothers the innocent Desdemona; then, when he realises how he has been misled, he stabs himself (track [10]). His words, ‘Do not fear me’, are in a free recitative; lyricism returns in the oscillating phrase accompanying the kiss, a second and final reference to the love duet in Act I.

Boito went on to furnish the libretto for Verdi’s last opera, *Falstaff*. However, many years before *Otello* he was the author of the libretto for *La Gioconda* under the anagrammatic name of Tobia Gorrio. The composer was Amilcare Ponchielli, whom we last met in connexion with the completion of *The Duke of Alba*. *La Gioconda*, set in seventeenth-century Venice, was based on a play by Victor Hugo, the source of many musical dramas from Verdi’s *Ernani* and *Rigoletto* to the present-day *Les*

Misérables, and produced at La Scala, Milan, in 1876.

Enzo Grimaldi, a Genoese prince, is betrothed to the singer Gioconda. However, he is still in love with Laura, whom he knew in Genoa and who is now married to one of the heads of the State Inquisition. Enzo, disguised as a sea captain from Dalmatia, has come to Venice, where he is a wanted man. Barnaba, a spy of the Inquisition, has made advances to Gioconda, who has rejected them; in the hope of improving his chances with her, he has arranged for Enzo and Laura to meet. As Enzo awaits his beloved on board his ship he sings ‘Heaven and sea!’ (track [2]), a lyrical aria in two near-identical stanzas.

In 1881 Ponchielli was appointed to the staff of the Milan Conservatory, where his pupils included Mascagni and Puccini. Mascagni came to prominence in 1890 with *Cavalleria rusticana* (*Rustic Chivalry*), the winning entry in a competition for one-act operas. It is the first in a series of *verismo* operas by Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano and others, where stories of low life are treated in vivid, even sensational, colours.

Cavalleria rusticana, based on a play by Giovanni Verga, is set in a Sicilian village on Easter Day. Turiddu, a young peasant, is

having an affair with his former love, Lola, now a married woman. Santuzza, his current lover, tells Lola's husband Alfio what is going on. After the famous *Intermezzo*, Turiddu leads the villagers in 'Neighbours, with a glass I meet you' (track [13]), a drinking-song in the tradition of the Verdian *brindisi*.

Alfio refuses to drink, and challenges Turiddu to a duel. In 'Mamma, this new wine really is powerful' (track [14]), Turiddu begs his mother to look after Santuzza. He goes off to fight, and is killed. As the curtain falls, the orchestra intones for the last time, *fortissimo* and in unison, the phrase first heard at Santuzza's entrance.

Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* (*The Touring Company*) has been harnessed to *Cavalleria rusticana* for so long that it is easy to overlook the fact that its premiere in Milan came two years after the Mascagni opera, which was first produced in Rome. The pairing is apt, as the stories and the setting have much in common; and there is an echo of *La Gioconda*, too, one of the characters in *Pagliacci* tipping off a husband about his wife's infidelity after himself being rejected by her.

The husband is Canio, the leader of the strolling players; in the second Act, during a performance of their harlequinade, make-

believe gives way to reality and Canio murders both wife and lover. In the aria that concludes Act I, 'Put on your costume' (track [1]) (perhaps better known still in the version by Frederick E. Weatherley as 'On with the motley'), Canio sings of his agony at having to perform while his heart is breaking.

Umberto Giordano was one of the contestants in the competition won by Mascagni; both men lived for years after their early triumphs, Giordano dying as recently as 1948. The plot of his best-known opera, *Andrea Chenier*, is a fictional story about the French poet André Chenier, and both of these excerpts are poetic set-pieces.

'One day, gazing at the splendour' (track [7]) comes in Act I, where Chenier is a guest at a party given by the Countess de Coigny. Madeleine, the daughter of the house, goads Chenier into reciting what has become known as the *Improvviso*. In a free declamation, owing something to the Wagner of *Lohengrin*, or even to Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, he contrasts the beauty of the natural world with the heartlessness of the church, the government and his aristocratic audience.

At the end of the opera, Chenier awaits execution, a victim of the Revolution. In 'Just

like a day in May time' (track [8]) he is writing his last poem, in which he salutes the Muse of poetry. Madeleine arrives, bribes the gaoler to free another woman and joins Chenier on the guillotine.

Andrea Chenier was first performed at La Scala, Milan, in March 1896. The previous month had seen the premiere in Turin of Puccini's *La bohème* conducted, as was the premiere of *Pagliacci*, by Toscanini. Puccini was the greatest of the successors to Verdi, and all his operas from the third, *Manon Lescaut* (1893), to the unfinished *Turandot* (completed and performed in 1926, after his death), have remained in the repertoire.

La bohème, based on a novel by Henry Murger, is set in Paris in about 1830. Rodolfo, a poet, shares a garret with a painter, a musician and a philosopher. While he is alone, a knock on the door announces their neighbour, Mimì, whose candle has gone out. As they search for her key, which she has dropped and Rodolfo has pocketed, their hands touch. In 'Your tiny hand is frozen' (track [6]), he sings of his life as a poet and of his rapture at their meeting. She responds with 'They call me Mimì', and they go off together to join the other three men at the Café Momus.

La bohème was followed by *Tosca*, performed in Rome in 1900. The setting is Rome exactly a century earlier: yet another love triangle, where Scarpia, the chief of police, lusts after Floria Tosca, a celebrated singer. Tosca's lover, Mario Cavaradossi, is painting a portrait in the church of Sant'Andrea Della Valle. In 'How strange a thing is beauty' (track [11]), Cavaradossi contrasts the golden-haired beauty of the unknown subject of his painting, whom he has observed at prayer, with that of his dark-eyed Tosca. The mysterious lady is the sister of a political prisoner, and it is Cavaradossi's attempt to help him escape that leads ultimately to the death of the three principals: Scarpia is murdered by Tosca, Cavaradossi is executed at the Castel Sant'Angelo and, seconds later, Tosca flings herself from the battlements to avoid capture by Scarpia's agents.

After *Tosca* came *Madam Butterfly*, based on a play that Puccini had seen in London; and it was another play by the same author, David Belasco, that was the source of Puccini's next opera, *The Girl of the Golden West* (*La fanciulla del West*). It was first performed at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, in 1910: Toscanini conducted and the starry cast

included Emmy Destinn and Enrico Caruso. The setting is the Californian gold rush of 1849. Minnie, the eponymous Girl, has gambled with the sheriff for the life of her lover Dick Johnson, a bandit. She wins, by cheating; but later on Johnson is recaptured. He is due to be hanged at the behest of the sheriff when he sings 'Let her believe that I have gained my freedom' (track 12). It is a restrained and dignified plea featuring one of Puccini's trademarks, where the bass of the harmony follows the vocal line note for note. Minnie arrives to rescue Johnson; and after some uncertainty, and a fond farewell to the miners to whom she had been a mother figure, the two of them ride off in what was for Puccini a rare happy ending.

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Born in Wales of Irish and Welsh parents, **Dennis O'Neill** is one of the world's leading tenors and a specialist in the works of Verdi, having sung more than twenty of the composer's operatic

roles for tenor. He has enjoyed a long association with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where his many roles have included Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Duca (*Rigoletto*), Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Macduff (*Macbeth*), Gustavo (*Un ballo in maschera*), Foresto (*Attila*), Otello, Don Carlos, Radames (*Aida*), Carlo (*Giovanna d'Arco*), and Jacopo (*I due Foscari*). He also enjoys a close relationship with Welsh National Opera.

For the Metropolitan Opera he has appeared as Alfredo (*La traviata*), Radames (*Aida*), in *La bohème*, Rigoletto, Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*) and Canio (*Pagliacci*). Other North American engagements have included Chicago Lyric Opera, San Francisco, San Diego, Vancouver Opera and concerts with the Philadelphia, Cleveland, Montreal, and Ottawa Symphonies, and for the Cincinnati Festival. He is a frequent guest at the Bayerische Staatsoper, and he has visited the opera houses of Vienna, Berlin, Bonn, Cologne, Hamburg, Nice, Zurich, Paris, Oslo, Brussels, Barcelona, Oviedo, the Arena di Verona and Turin.

Dennis O'Neill is also a very busy concert artist and is well known for his performances of Verdi's *Requiem* which he has televised no

less than seven times, and has sung throughout Europe with conductors including Muti, Sir Colin Davis, Sinopoli, Sir Simon Rattle and Sir John Pritchard. His many recordings include solo albums, videos of *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Macbeth* and *Mefistofele*. Releases in Chandos' Opera in English series include *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *La bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci* and previous disc of operatic arias. Dennis O'Neill was awarded the CBE in the 2000 New Year's Honours list.



David Parry studied with Sergiu Celibidache and began his career as Sir John Pritchard's assistant. He made his debut with English Music Theatre, then became a staff conductor at Städtische Bühnen,

Dortmund and at Opera North. He was Music Director of Opera 80 from 1983 to 1987 and since 1992 has been the founding Music Director of Almeida Opera.

He works extensively in both opera and concert, nationally and internationally. He has conducted several productions at English National Opera and 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

Moore's 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 *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *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 Moore's Foundation.



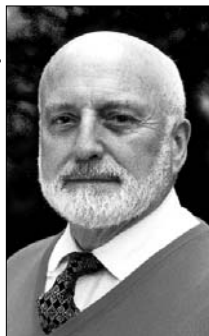
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Dennis O'Neill as Foresto in The Royal Opera's production of Verdi's *Attila*

Bill Cooper/PMF



SIR PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

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

In 1957 he joined his father's business, Littlewoods, becoming Vice-Chairman in 1976, Chairman from 1977 to 1980 and remaining a director until 1993. His public appointments include from 1981 to 1983 Governor of the BBC, Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1978 to 1985 and from 1988 to 1992 a Director of Scottish Opera. He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In 1992 he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant (DL) of Lancashire by HM Queen Elizabeth II. He was appointed a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1991 and received a Knighthood in the New Year's Honours List for 2003 in recognition of his charitable services to the arts.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

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

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

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

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

Opera has given the Foundation its most public 'face'. Since Peter Moores initiated the live recording of the 'Goodall Ring' at the London Coliseum in the 1970s, the Foundation has enabled some eighty recordings to be produced: Chandos Records' Opera in English series – 'Opera that speaks your language' – is now the largest recorded collection of operas sung in English whilst Opera Rara's recordings of rare *bel canto* operas have opened up an immensely rich 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

Die Oper entstand Ende des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts in Italien aus den Versuchen einer Gruppe florentinischer Edelleute, die unter dem falschen Eindruck, dass die altgriechischen Tragödien als durchkomponierte Gesangswerke aufgeführt worden waren, diese Tradition wiederbeleben wollten. Fast drei Jahrhunderte lang dominierte die italienische Oper das Genre so stark, dass in deutscher, französischer und selbst englischer Sprache komponierte Werke im London des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts regelmäßig in italienischer Übersetzung aufgeführt wurden. Aber wenn wir die Opern von Ausländern wie Händel, Gluck und Mozart einmal ausnehmen, kann es in der Geschichte der italienischen Oper keine glorreichere Ära gegeben haben als die Zeit von Rossini bis Puccini, der die vorliegende CD gewidmet ist. Es war das Jahrhundert, in dem der männliche Sopran als Heldenrolle unterging und der Tenor als Liebhaber und als Kämpfer hervortrat.

Als 1817 in Neapel Rossinis **Armida** inszeniert wurde, herrschte dort jedenfalls an Tenören kein Mangel. Das Werk war von dem

Impresario Domenico Barbaia für die Eröffnung des neu erbauten Teatro San Carlo in Auftrag gegeben worden und enthielt sechs Tenorrollen, für die allerdings nur vier Sänger erforderlich waren. Die Partie des Rinaldo übernahm Andrea Nozzari, der im Jahr zuvor in Rossinis *Otello* aufgetreten war; Armida wurde von Isabella Colbran gesungen, der Geliebten Barbaias und späteren ersten Gattin Rossinis. Dass Dennis O'Neill die enormen technischen Anforderungen dieser Rolle, der robusten Musik Verdis und des *Verismo* zu bewältigen vermag, ist ein Beweis für seine überragende Technik.

Die auf der Versdichtung *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581) von Torquato Tasso beruhende Handlung hatte schon Komponisten von Monteverdi bis Haydn gereizt. Armida, eine sarazenische Zauberin, ist nach Jerusalem gekommen, um Rinaldo, einen Anführer der ersten Kreuzritter, zu verführen und die Einnahme der Stadt durch die Christen zu verhindern. Gegen Ende der Oper bringen Carlo und Ubaldo den vernarrten Rinaldo wieder zu Verstand, indem sie ihm in einem Schild sein Spiegelbild zeigen. Der erste Teil

des nun folgenden Trios, "I lost the will to action" (Band [5]), ist ein Kanon, in dem die Sänger nacheinander die gleiche Melodie vortragen.

Zwischen Rossinis letzter Oper, *Guillaume Tell* (1828), und *Nabucco* (1842), dem ersten großen Erfolg Verdis, beherrschten Donizetti und Bellini die Szene. Ebenso wie Rossini war auch Donizetti ein Meister der Oper in ihrer komischen und ihrer ernsten Form. **The Duke of Alba** wäre ein gutes Beispiel für die Opera seria, wenn Donizetti nicht 1839 die Arbeit daran abgebrochen hätte. Nach einer Kontroverse, an der Ponchielli, der Komponist von *La Gioconda*, beteiligt war, wurde das Werk von Donizettis Freund und Schüler Matteo Salvi und anderen vollendet und 1882 in Rom uraufgeführt. Die Handlung folgt ähnlichen Spuren wie Verdis *Les Vêpres siciliennes*.

Historisch ist verbürgt, dass der berühmte Herzog von Alba die zum Reich König Philips II. von Spanien gehörenden Niederlande brutal unterdrückte. In der Oper entdeckt Marcello von Brügge, der mit seiner Geliebten Amelia den Aufstand gegen die Spanier führt, mit Entsetzen, dass er der uneheliche Sohn Albas ist. "Angel of love divine!" (Band [6]), wurde von Salvi zu Beginn des Schlussaktes

eingefügt. Der im einleitenden Rezitativ erwähnte Vater Amelias, der Patriot Egmont, ist uns auch aus dem gleichnamigen Drama Goethes und der Bühnenmusik Beethovens bekannt.

Das Opernschaffen Verdis erstreckte sich über ein halbes Jahrhundert hinweg, von *Oberto* (1839) bis zu *Falstaff* (1893). **Attila** (1846) wurde vom Teatro La Fenice in Venedig bestellt, wo Verdi zwei Jahre zuvor mit *Ernani* großen Erfolg gehabt hatte. Neben dem Hunnenkönig Attila hat die Oper drei weitere Hauptrollen in Ezio, einem römischen General, Odabella, der Tochter des Herrschers von Aquileia, und Foresto, einem Ritter von Aquileia. Attila hat alle drei gegen sich aufgebracht: Ezio durch Zurückweisung seines unehrenhaften Vorschlags, insgeheim Frieden gegen den römischen Kaiser zu schließen; Odabella durch die Ermordung ihres Vaters auf dem Schlachtfeld; und Foresto, dem er dessen Geliebte Odabella abgewinnen will.

Als Odabella verhindert, dass Attila von Foresto vergiftet wird (nur weil sie selbst ihren Vater rächen will), gelobt Attila, sie zur Frau zu nehmen. Die folgenden Komplikationen führen zu dem Trio "Foresto, my soul belongs to you" (Band [5]), nach dem Attila tatsächlich

von Odabella erstochen wird. Ungläubig wie Julius Caesar ("Et tu, Brute?") haucht er sein Leben aus.

Verdis nächste Oper für La Fenice war *Rigoletto* (1851). Inzwischen hatte er sich als weltberühmter und heiß begehrter Opernkomponist etabliert. **Il trovatore** (1853) beruhte auf einem Schauspiel von Antonio Garcia Gutierrez, das bereits zwei andere Komponisten vor ihm inspiriert hatte, und wurde zuerst am Teatro Apollo in Rom inszeniert. Die im Spanien des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts spielende Handlung dreht sich um die Rivalität zwischen Manrico und dem Grafen von Luna um die Liebe Leonoras. In "When holy church has blessed our love" (Band [4]) steht Leonora vor der Vermählung mit Manrico, dem besagten Troubadour. Ihr Liebesgespräch zum Klang der Orgel aus der benachbarten Kapelle wird jäh von der Nachricht unterbrochen, dass die Zigeunerin Azucena, Manricos vermeintliche Mutter, auf dem Scheiterhaufen verbrannt werden soll. Manrico, nie ein Mann der langen Worte, eilt zu ihrer Rettung davon – hat aber vorher noch Zeit für seine Cabaletta "That fierce inferno", mit dem berühmten, wenn auch unkanonischen hohen C. Der Befreiungsversuch scheitert: Leonora

vergiftet sich, und der Herzog lässt Manrico, der sich zu spät als sein Bruder erweist, hinrichten.

Im Rahmen der Feierlichkeiten zur Eröffnung des Suezkanals baute der Khedive von Ägypten ein Opernhaus in Kairo, das 1869 mit einer Aufführung von *Rigoletto* eröffnet wurde. Die Bitte um Komposition einer Festhymne hatte Verdi abgelehnt, doch ließ er sich schließlich dazu bewegen, mit **Aida** (1871) eine große Oper mit ägyptischem Hintergrund zu schreiben, möglicherweise unter dem geschickt erzeugten Eindruck, dass der Auftrag sonst an Gounod oder Wagner gegangen wäre.

So wie in *Il trovatore* geht es auch hier um ein Dreiecksverhältnis, allerdings diesmal in gegengeschlechtlicher Konstellation. Zwischen Ägypten und Äthiopien herrscht ständiger Krieg. In "I pray that I be chosen" (Band [3]) erhofft sich Radames die Ernennung zum Heerführer der Ägypter gegen die drohende Invasion, und in "Goddess Aida" singt er von seiner Liebe zu Aida, der Tochter des Äthioperkönigs Amonasro, die unerkannt als Sklavin ihrerseits Amneris, der Tochter des Königs von Ägypten, dient.

Radames kehrt siegreich von seinem Feldzug heim. Unter seinen Gefangenen

befindet sich Amonasro, den nur Aida erkennt. Der Vater bittet sie, seine Identität nicht zu verraten, und verlangt später von ihr, dass sie Radames nach der Marschroute seiner Armee für den nächsten Tag aushorchen soll. Später fliegt die Verschwörung auf: Amonasro wird getötet, Aida kann entkommen, und Radames wird festgenommen. Amneris bietet dem von ihr selbst geliebten Radames an, den König um Begnadigung zu bitten, wenn er nur auf Aida verzichtet. Radames lehnt ab; als er vor Gericht schweigt, wird er zum Tode verurteilt: Er soll lebendig begraben werden. In der letzten Szene schleicht sich Aida zu ihm in die Gruft, um gemeinsam mit ihm zu sterben.

Nach *Aida* vergingen viele Jahre, bevor **Otello** 1887 zur Uraufführung kam. Unterdessen war 1874 das *Requiem* erschienen, und in den frühen achtziger Jahren hatte Verdi *Simone Boccanegra* und *Don Carlos* überarbeitet. Dass *Otello* überhaupt entstand, ist der Beharrlichkeit und List seines Verlegers Giulio Ricordi und dem Librettisten Arrigo Boito zu verdanken.

Boito gelang es auf meisterhafte Weise, das Shakespeare-Drama aufzubereiten und zu straffen, und Verdi seinerseits verband in seiner Musik übliche Standardszenen mit einer

neuen Flexibilität in der Melodieführung. Das große Duett zum Abschluss des zweiten Aktes (Band [9]) ist ein herrliches Beispiel für eine solche Traditionsnummer. Iago hat Otello von der angeblichen Untreue seiner Gemahlin Desdemona überzeugen können. Als die Musik mit dem dreifachen Ausruf "Blood!" den Siedepunkt erreicht, bricht Otello in die Knie: "Yes, I swear by skies of marble" – ein Racheschwur, in den Iago später mit dem Orchester grollend einstimmt.

Im vierten Akt erwürgt Otello die unschuldige Desdemona; als ihm schließlich die Wahrheit aufgeht, ersticht er sich (Band [10]). Seine Erklärung "Do not fear me" verbleibt im freien Rezitativ; die Lyrik kehrt in der oszillierenden Phrase zur Begleitung des Kusses zurück, ein zweiter und letzter Bezug auf das Liebesduett im zweiten Akt.

Boito schrieb auch noch das Libretto für die letzte Oper Verdis, *Falstaff*. Doch schon viele Jahre vor *Otello* hatte er unter dem anagrammatischen Namen Tobia Gorrio den Text für **La Gioconda** verfasst. Der Komponist war Amilcare Ponchielli, den wir bereits im Zusammenhang mit der Vollendung von *The Duke of Alba* erwähnt haben. *La Gioconda* spielt im Venedig des siebzehnten

Jahrhunderts und beruht auf einem Schauspiel von Victor Hugo, der zahlreiche Bühnenkomponisten inspirierte – von Verdis *Ernani* und *Rigoletto* bis zu dem Musical *Les Misérables*. Die Oper kam 1876 an der Mailänder Scala zur Uraufführung.

Enzo Grimaldi, ein Prinz aus Genua, ist mit der Sängerin Gioconda verlobt. Nach wie vor liebt er jedoch Laura, mit der er in Genua befreundet war und die nun mit dem obersten Inquisitor von Venedig verheiratet ist. Als dalmatinischer Seemann verkleidet ist Enzo in die Dogenstadt zurückgekehrt, obwohl er dort auf der Fahndungsliste steht. Der Inquisitionsspitzen Barnaba hat es auf Gioconda abgesehen, die jedoch nichts mit ihm zu tun haben will; in der Hoffnung auf eine Verbesserung seiner Aussichten hat er eine heimliche Begegnung zwischen Enzo und Laura arrangiert. Während Enzo an Bord seines Schiffes auf die Geliebte wartet, singt er “Heaven and sea” (Band [2]), eine ungemein schwierige lyrische Arie in zwei fast identischen Strophen.

1881 wurde Ponchielli an das Mailänder Konservatorium berufen, wo Mascagni und Puccini zu seinen Schülern gehörten. Mascagni machte sich 1890 mit *Cavalleria*

rusticana einen Namen, als er mit diesem Melodrama einen Komponistenwettbewerb für Einakter gewann. Es war der erste Ausdruck eines neuen, naturalistischen Opernstils, der als *Verismo* bekannt wurde und Komponisten wie Leoncavallo und Giordano zu realistischen und zuweilen sensationellen Darstellungen des Alltagslebens inspirierte.

Cavalleria rusticana, nach einem Volksstück von Giovanni Verga, spielt an einem Ostersonntag in einem sizilianischen Dorf. Turiddu, ein junger Bauer, hat eine Affäre mit seiner früheren Geliebten Lola, die inzwischen verheiratet ist. Seine neue Flamme Santuzza klärt Lolas Ehemann Alfio über die Vorgänge auf. Nach dem berühmten Intermezzo animiert Turiddu die Dorfbewohner mit “Neighbours, with a glass I meet you” (Band [13]), einem Trinklied in der Tradition der Brindisi Verdis.

Alfio ist nicht zu besänftigen und fordert Turiddu zum Zweikampf auf. In “Mamma, this new wine really is powerful” (Band [14]) bittet Turiddu seine Mutter darum, für Santuzza zu sorgen. Die Auseinandersetzung mit Alfio überlebt er nicht. Während der Vorhang fällt, spielt das Orchester zum letztenmal, fortissimo und unisono, das Thema, das beim ersten Auftritt Santuzzas erklang.

Leoncavallos *Pagliacci* (1892) wird schon so lange mit *Cavalleria rusticana* gemeinsam aufgeführt, dass man die Unabhängigkeit der beiden Werke leicht übersieht: Es erlebte seine Premiere in Mailand zwei Jahre nach der Mascagni-Oper, die ihren Einstand in Rom hatte. Die Kombination bietet sich jedoch an, da beide handlungs- und milieumäßig viel gemeinsam haben; auch *La Gioconda* klingt an, wenn eine der Figuren in *Pagliacci* einen betrogenen Ehemann aufklärt, nachdem er selbst von der Frau verschmäht worden ist.

In diesem Fall handelt es sich bei dem Hahnrei um Canio, den Prinzipal der Komödiantentruppe; im zweiten Akt, während einer Aufführung der Harlekinade, wird der Spaß zur schrecklichen Realität: Canio bringt seine Frau und ihren Liebhaber um. In der Arie zum Abschluss des ersten Aktes, “Put on your costume” (Band [1]) (besser bekannt vielleicht in der Version von Frederick E. Weatherley als “On with the motley”), bringt Canio seine Verzweiflung darüber zum Ausdruck, dass er mit gebrochenem Herzen das Publikum zum Lachen bringen muss.

Umberto Giordano war einer der vielen anderen Teilnehmer an dem von Mascagni gewonnenen Wettbewerb; beiden Männern war nach ihren frühen Triumphen ein langes

Leben beschieden (Giordano starb 1948). Seine bekannteste Oper, *Andrea Chenier*, dreht sich um eine fiktive Geschichte über den französischen Dichter André Chenier, und die beiden hier enthaltenen Auszüge sind Standardszenen.

“One day, gazing at the splendour” (Band [7]) kommt im ersten Akt, als Chenier an einem Künstlerfest der Gräfin Coigny teilnimmt. Madeleine, die Tochter des Hauses, verleitet Chenier dazu, das sogenannte *Improvviso* zu rezitieren. In freier Deklamation, die Wagners *Lohengrin* und sogar Mussorgskis *Boris Godunow* einiges verdankt, kontrastiert er die Schönheit der Natur mit der Herzlosigkeit der Kirche, des Staates und des anwesenden aristokratischen Publikums.

Zum Ende der Oper steht Chenier vor seiner Hinrichtung, ein Opfer der Revolution. In “Just like a day in May time” (Band [8]) schreibt er, ähnlich wie Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, seine letzten, der Dichtermuse gewidmeten Verse. Madeleine tritt auf und besticht den Schließer, der an ihrer Stelle eine andere Frau freilässt, so dass sie gemeinsam mit Chenier zur Guillotine gehen kann.

Andrea Chenier wurde im März 1896 an der Mailänder Scala uraufgeführt. Im Monat davor hatte Turin die Premiere von *La bohème*

erlebt; nach *Pagliacci* führte Toscanini auch hier den Taktstock. Puccini war der größte Nachfolger Verdis, und mit Ausnahme zweier Erstlingswerke haben sich alle seine Opern von *Manon Lescaut* (1893) bis zu *Turandot* (posthum vollendet und 1926 uraufgeführt) im Repertoire behauptet.

La bohème, nach einem Roman von Henry Murger, spielt um 1830 in Paris. Der Dichter Rodolfo teilt eine Mansarde mit einem Maler, einem Musiker und einem Philosophen. Er ist alleine, als es an der Tür klopft und seine Nachbarin Mimì um Licht für ihre erloschene Kerze bittet. Während sie nach Mimìs Schlüssel suchen, den sie verloren und Rodolfo schnell eingesteckt hat, berühren sich ihre Hände. In "Your tiny hand is frozen" (Band [16]), singt er von seinem Dichterleben und seiner Freude über ihre Begegnung. Sie erwidert "They call me Mimì", und gemeinsam gesellen sie sich zu den drei Freunden im Café Momus.

Auf *La bohème* folgte die Oper *Tosca*, die 1900 in Rom zur Uraufführung kam. Schauplatz ist die Stadt genau ein Jahrhundert zuvor, und erneut sorgt ein Dreiecksverhältnis für Spannung. Der Polizeichef Scarpia begehrt die berühmte Sängerin Floria Tosca. Toscas Geliebter, Mario Cavaradossi, malt ein Porträt

in der Kirche Sant' Andrea della Valle. In "How strange a thing is beauty" (Band [11]) vergleicht Cavaradossi die unbekannte Schöne in seinem Gemälde, die er mit ihrem blonden Haar beim Gebet beobachtet hat, mit seiner schwarzäugigen Tosca. Diese Unbekannte ist die Schwester eines politischen Häftlings, und Cavaradossi's Versuch, diesem zur Flucht zu verhelfen, führt letztlich zum Tod der drei Hauptfiguren: Scarpia wird von Tosca ermordet, Cavaradossi wird im Castello Sant'Angelo hingerichtet, und wenige Augenblicke später stürzt sich Tosca von der Brüstung, um den Häschern Scarpia zu entkommen.

Nach *Tosca* komponierte Puccini *Madama Butterfly*, inspiriert von einem Bühnenstück, das er in London gesehen hatte; der Autor, David Belasco, lieferte Puccini auch den Stoff für seine nächste Oper, *The Girl of the Golden West*. Das Werk wurde 1910 an der Metropolitan Opera in New York uraufgeführt; Toscanini dirigierte eine Starbesetzung mit Emmy Destinn und Enrico Caruso. Die Handlung spielt während des kalifornischen Goldfiebers 1849. Die Wirtin Minnie, das besagte Mädchen aus dem Westen, spielt mit dem Sheriff um das Leben des Banditen Dick Johnson, ihres Geliebten.

Sie gewinnt durch Betrug, doch fällt Johnson dem Sheriff erneut in die Hände. Vor seiner Hinrichtung singt er "Let her believe that I have gained my freedom" (Band [12]). Es ist eine letzte Bitte, beherrscht und würdevoll, die Puccini einer für ihn typischen Behandlung unterzieht: Der Bass der Harmoniebegleitung folgt der Gesangsstimme Note für Note. Minnie eilt herbei, um Johnson zu retten; und nach anfänglicher Ungewissheit und einem traurigen Abschied von den Goldgräbern, für die sie eine Muttergestalt gewesen ist, ziehen die beiden einer bei Puccini seltenen glücklichen Zukunft entgegen.

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Übersetzung: Andreas Klatt

Der Waliser Dennis O'Neill wurde in ein irisch-walisches Elternhaus geboren und zählt zu den führenden Tenören der Welt. Als Verdi-Spezialist hat er über zwanzig Opernrollen dieses Komponisten gesungen. Seit vielen Jahren ist er mit der Royal Opera, Covent Garden assoziiert, wo er u.a. Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Duca (*Rigoletto*), Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Macduff (*Macbeth*), Gustavo (*Un ballo in maschera*), Foresto (*Attila*), Otello,

Don Carlos, Radames (*Aida*), Carlo (*Giovanna d'Arco*) und Jacopo (*I due Foscari*) verkörpert hat. Auch mit der Welsh National Opera verbindet ihn eine enge Zusammenarbeit.

An der Metropolitan Opera ist er als Alfredo (*La traviata*), Radames (*Aida*), Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Rigoletto, Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*) und Canio (*Pagliacci*) aufgetreten. Weitere nordamerikanische Verpflichtungen haben ihn an die Chicago Lyric Opera, San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, Vancouver Opera und zu Konzerten mit den Sinfonieorchestern von Philadelphia, Cleveland, Montreal und Ottawa sowie zum Cincinnati Festival geführt. Er ist häufiger Gast an der Bayerischen Staatsoper und an den Opern von Wien, Berlin, Bonn, Köln, Hamburg, Nizza, Zürich, Paris, Oslo, Brüssel, Barcelona und Oviedo, in der Arena di Verona und in Turin aufgetreten.

Dennis O'Neill ist auch als Konzertkünstler rege und bekannt für seine Auftritte in Verdis *Requiem*, die nicht weniger als sieben Mal vom Fernsehen übertragen worden sind; mit Dirigenten wie Riccardo Muti, Sir Colin Davis, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Sir Simon Rattle und Sir John Pritchard hat er in ganz Europa konzertiert. Seine umfangreiche Diskographie

umfasst Soloalben und Videoaufnahmen von *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Macbeth* und *Mefistofele*. Für Chandos hat er in der Reihe "Opera in English" *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *La bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci* und eine frühere Sammlung von Opernarien aufgenommen. Im Jahr 2000 wurde Dennis O'Neill mit dem Verdienstorden CBE ausgezeichnet.

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 *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *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*, die preisgekrönte *Tosca* und Highlights aus dem *Rosenkavalier*, jeweils in Zusammenarbeit mit der Peter Moores Foundation.

Dennis O'Neill as Ismaele in
Welsh National Opera's production
of Verdi's *Nabucco*



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Grands airs d'opéra

L'opéra est apparu en Italie à la fin du seizième siècle. Il est le résultat de la tentative délibérée d'un groupe d'aristocrates florentins de recréer le monde des tragédies de la Grèce antique, croyant à tort qu'elles devaient être chantées du début à la fin. L'opéra italien resta prédominant pendant presque trois siècles, à tel point qu'à Londres au dix-neuvième siècle, les opéras écrits sur des livrets allemands, français et même anglais étaient régulièrement chantés en traductions italiennes. Mais si l'on excepte les opéras de compositeurs étrangers tels que Haendel, Gluck et Mozart, il n'y eut sûrement pas de période plus glorieuse dans l'histoire de l'opéra italien que celle explorée dans le présent enregistrement, de Rossini à Puccini. Ce siècle vit la disparition des sopranistes dans les rôles héroïques, et l'émergence des ténors dans les rôles d'amants et de guerriers.

Les ténors étaient certainement nombreux à Naples, ville où **Armida** de Rossini fut produit en 1817. L'ouvrage avait été commandé par l'imprésario Domenico Barbaia pour l'ouverture du théâtre San Carlo nouvellement reconstruit, et il incluait six rôles de ténors,

mais deux de ces rôles étant doublés, seuls quatre ténors furent nécessaires. Le rôle de Rinaldo fut interprété par Andrea Nozzari, qui avait été la vedette dans *Otello* de Rossini l'année précédente; celui d'Armida fut chanté par la maîtresse de Barbaia, Isabella Colbran, qui devint plus tard la première épouse de Rossini. La capacité de Dennis O'Neill de dominer les difficultés techniques considérables de ce rôle et la musique robuste de Verdi et le vérisme démontrent son éblouissante technique.

S'inspirant du poème épique *La Jérusalem délivrée* du Tasse, publié en 1581, l'histoire a attiré l'attention des compositeurs depuis Monteverdi jusqu'à Haydn. La sorcière sarrasine Armida est venue à Jérusalem pour séduire Rinaldo, le chef des chevaliers chrétiens de la première Croisade. Vers la fin de l'opéra, l'amoureux Rinaldo est ramené à la réalité par Carlo et Ubaldo quand ils lui montrent son reflet dans un bouclier. La première partie du trio qui suit, "I lost the will to action" (page 19), est un canon dans lequel chacune des voix chante la même musique à tour de rôle.

Entre le dernier opéra de Rossini, *Guillaume Tell* (1828) et le premier grand succès de Verdi, *Nabucco* (1842), la scène fut dominée par Donizetti et Bellini. Tout comme Rossini, Donizetti fut un maître de l'opéra comique et de l'opéra sérieux. **The Duke of Alba** est un exemple d'opéra sérieux; ou, plutôt, il l'aurait été si Donizetti ne l'avait pas laissé à moitié inachevé en 1839. Après une controverse dans laquelle Ponchielli, le compositeur de *La Gioconda*, fut impliqué, l'opéra fut terminé par plusieurs musiciens dont l'ami et l'élève de Donizetti, Matteo Salvi, et représenté à Rome en 1882. Ce drame est semblable à celui des *Vêpres siciliennes* de Verdi.

Le duc d'Albe historique est célèbre pour son traitement brutal des sujets flamands du roi Philippe II d'Espagne. Dans l'opéra, Marcello de Bruges, qui avec son amante Amelia est le chef d'une rébellion contre les Espagnols, est horrifié de découvrir qu'il est le fils illégitime du duc d'Albe. "Angel of love divine!" (page 8), l'une des additions de Salvi, est entendu au début du dernier Acte. Le père d'Amelia, mentionné dans le récitatif d'introduction, est le patriote Egmont, le sujet de la pièce de Goethe pour laquelle Beethoven composa sa musique de scène.

La carrière de Verdi comme compositeur d'opéra dura plus de cinquante ans, depuis *Oberto* en 1839 jusqu'à *Falstaff* en 1893. **Attila** (1846) fut une commande du Teatro La Fenice de Venise où *Ernani* avait remporté un grand succès deux ans plus tôt. Outre le roi des Huns Attila, l'ouvrage comporte trois autres rôles principaux: Ezio, un général romain; Odabella, la fille du seigneur d'Aquilée; Foresto, un chevalier aquiléen. Attila s'est fait l'ennemi des trois: Ezio, en rejetant sa proposition déshonorante de s'unir avec lui contre l'empereur romain; Odabella, en tuant son père pendant la bataille; et Foresto, qui est l'amant d'Odabella.

Quand Odabella empêche Foresto d'empoisonner Attila, uniquement parce qu'elle souhaite se venger elle-même, Attila jure de l'épouser. La situation complexe qui s'ensuit conduit au trio, "Foresto, my soul belongs to you" (page 5), après quoi Attila est poignardé par Odabella. Il meurt en murmurant les paroles équivalentes de Jules César, "Et tu, Brute?"

L'opéra suivant de Verdi pour La Fenice fut *Rigoletto* (1851). A cette date, il était devenu le compositeur d'opéra de plus célèbre et le plus recherché au monde. **Il trovatore** (*Le Trouvère*, 1853), d'après une pièce d'Antonio Garcia

Gutierrez déjà utilisée par deux autres compositeurs, fut son premier ouvrage à être représenté au Teatro Apollo de Rome. L'action se situe en Espagne au quinzième siècle, et traite de la rivalité entre Manrico et le comte Di Luna pour conquérir l'amour de Leonora. Dans "When holy church has blessed our love" (page [4]), Leonora est sur le point d'épouser Manrico, le troubadour du titre. Leurs échanges amoureux, tandis que l'orgue joue dans une chapelle adjacente, sont brusquement interrompus par la nouvelle annonçant que la gitane Azucena, que Manrico croit être sa mère, va être brûlée sur le bûcher. Ne cessant jamais d'être un homme d'action, Manrico abandonne la cérémonie de mariage pour voler à son secours – mais pas avant de chanter sa cabalette, "That fierce inferno", célèbre pour un contre-ut qui ne figure pas dans la partition de Verdi. Sa tentative échoue: Leonora s'empoisonne et Manrico est exécuté par le comte di Luna, qui se révèle être son frère.

Parmi les célébrations marquant l'ouverture du canal de Suez, le khédive d'Égypte fit construire un théâtre lyrique au Caire, qui fut inauguré en 1869 avec une représentation de *Rigoletto*. Après avoir décliné la commande du khédive d'écrire un hymne pour inaugurer ces

célébrations, Verdi finit par accepter de composer *Aida*, un grand opéra dont l'action se situe en Égypte, en partie peut-être parce qu'on lui fit adroitement croire que la commande pourrait aller à Gounod ou à Wagner.

Tout comme dans *Il trovatore*, la situation évolue autour d'un triangle amoureux, mais ici les sexes sont inversés. Les Égyptiens et les Éthiopiens sont en guerre: dans "I pray that I be chosen" (page [3]), Radames espère qu'il sera nommé chef de l'armée égyptienne, tandis que dans "Goddess Aida", il exprime son amour pour Aida, la fille du roi d'Éthiopie, et l'esclave d'Amnérís.

Radames est victorieux, et revient avec des prisonniers parmi lesquels se trouve Amonasro, le roi d'Éthiopie, qui est le père d'Aida. Amonasro cache son identité, et persuade plus tard Aida d'amener Radames par la ruse à lui dévoiler la route que son armée doit prendre le jour suivant. Mais leur complot est découvert: Amonasro est tué, Aida s'enfuit et Radames est arrêté. Amnérís offre à Radames d'avoir la vie sauve s'il renonce à Aida. Radames refuse. Dans le procès qui s'ensuit, il garde le silence et est condamné à être emmuré vivant. Dans la dernière scène, Aida le rejoint en secret dans la tombe, et ils meurent enlacés.

Un grand intervalle sépara *Aida* et la première d'*Otello* en 1887. Cependant, le *Requiem* fut créé en 1874, et Verdi travailla à la révision de *Simon Boccanegra* et à celle de *Don Carlos* au début des années 1880. La composition d'*Otello* est entièrement due à la persévérance et à l'habileté de Giulio Ricordi, l'éditeur du compositeur, et à Arrigo Boito, l'auteur du livret.

Boito réalisa un chef-d'œuvre en adaptant et en condensant la pièce de Shakespeare, et Verdi répondit par une musique qui combine les morceaux habituels avec une nouvelle flexibilité de la ligne mélodique. Le grand duo qui conclut l'Acte II (page [9]) en est un exemple magnifique. Iago a convaincu Otello que Desdémone, sa fiancée, est infidèle. Tandis que la musique approche de son point culminant, Otello répète trois fois le mot "blood", puis tombe à genoux et chante "Yes, I swear by skies of marble", dont la mélodie est reprise plus tard par Iago grondant au loin dans l'orchestre.

À l'Acte IV, Otello étouffe l'innocente Desdémone; ensuite, quand il réalise qu'il a été induit en erreur, il se poignarde (page [10]). Ses paroles, "Do not fear me", sont chantées en forme de récitatif libre; le lyrisme revient dans la phrase oscillante accompagnant le baiser,

une seconde et finale référence au duo d'amour de l'Acte I.

Boito allait être plus tard l'auteur du livret du dernier opéra de Verdi, *Falstaff*. Toutefois, de nombreuses années avant *Otello*, il avait rédigé le livret de *La Gioconda* sous le pseudonyme de Tobia Gorria (l'anagramme de son nom). Le compositeur était Amilcare Ponchielli, qu'il rencontra pour la dernière fois à l'occasion de l'achèvement de l'opéra *Le Duc d'Albe*. Créé à La Scala de Milan en 1876, *La Gioconda*, dont l'action se situe dans la Venise du dix-septième siècle, se base sur une pièce de Victor Hugo, un auteur qui inspira de nombreux drames musicaux depuis *Ernani* et *Rigoletto* de Verdi jusqu'à nos jours avec *Les Misérables*.

Enzo Grimaldi, un prince génois, est fiancé à Gioconda. Cependant, il est toujours amoureux de Laura, qu'il a connue à Gênes et qui est maintenant mariée à l'un des chefs de l'Inquisition. Enzo, déguisé en capitaine de navire dalmatien, est arrivé à Venise où il est recherché par la police. Barnaba, un espion de l'Inquisition, a fait des avances à Gioconda qui les a repoussées; dans l'espoir d'améliorer ses chances auprès d'elle, il a arrangé une rencontre entre Enzo et Laura. Sur son navire, Enzo attend sa bien-aimée et chante "Heaven

and seal” (page 2), une aria lyrique d’une grande difficulté technique constituée de deux strophes presque identiques.

En 1881, Ponchielli fut nommé professeur au Conservatoire de Milan où il compta Mascagni et Puccini parmi ses élèves. Mascagni devint célèbre en 1890 avec *Cavalleria rusticana*, un ouvrage qui reçut le premier prix d’un concours pour un opéra en un acte. C’est le premier d’une série d’opéras veristes de Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano et autres, qui utilisent de manière spectaculaire, voire sensationnelle, des histoires se déroulant dans les bas-fonds.

L’action de *Cavalleria rusticana*, d’après une pièce de Giovanni Verga, se situe dans un village sicilien le dimanche de Pâques. Turiddu, un jeune paysan, a une liaison avec Lola, l’une de ses anciennes maîtresses maintenant mariée à Alfio. Santuzza, sa maîtresse actuelle, va raconter à Alfio ce qui se passe. Après le célèbre *Intermezzo*, Turiddu conduit les villageois dans “Neighbours, with a glass I meet you” (page 13), une chanson à boire dans la tradition des *brindisi* de Verdi.

Alfio refuse de boire, et provoque Turiddu en duel. Dans “Mamma, this new wine really is powerful” (page 14), Turiddu supplie sa mère de prendre soin de Santuzza. Il se rend

au duel et se fait tuer. Tandis que le rideau se baisse, l’orchestre reprend pour la dernière fois, *fortissimo* et à l’unisson, la phrase entendue pour la première fois lors de l’entrée de Santuzza.

Pagliacci de Leoncavallo est uni à *Cavalleria rusticana* depuis si longtemps qu’il est aisé d’oublier le fait que sa création à Milan eut lieu deux ans après celle de l’opéra de Mascagni, qui fut créé à Rome. Ce couplage est heureux, car les histoires et les lieux de l’action ont de nombreux points en commun; et l’on peut également déceler un écho de *La Gioconda*, car l’un des personnages dans *Pagliacci* informe un mari de l’infidélité de sa femme après avoir été rejeté par elle.

Le mari en question est Canio, le directeur d’une troupe ambulante; à l’Acte II, pendant l’une de leurs arlequinades, la fantaisie tourne à la réalité, et Canio tue sa femme et son amant. Dans l’aria qui conclut l’Acte I, “Put on your costume” (page 1), Canio exprime la douleur qui l’étreint de devoir jouer pendant que son cœur se brise.

Umberto Giordano fut l’un des candidats au concours remporté par Mascagni, et les deux hommes vécurent longtemps après leurs triomphes de jeunesse, Giordano disparaissant en 1948. L’intrigue de son opéra le plus

célèbre, **Andrea Chenier**, est une histoire fictive mettant en scène le poète français André Chénier, et les deux extraits enregistrés ici sont des morceaux pleins de poésie.

“One day, gazing at the splendour” (page 7) est extrait de l’Acte I. Chénier arrive à une réception donnée par la comtesse de Coigny. Sa fille Madeleine le pousse à réciter ce qui est devenu connu sous le nom de *Improvviso di Chenier*, une déclamation libre devant quelque chose au Wagner de *Lohengrin*, voire au Moussorgski de *Boris Goudonov*. Il y oppose la beauté de la nature à l’indifférence de l’Église, du gouvernement et des aristocrates.

Victime de la Révolution, Chénier attend son exécution à la fin de l’opéra. Comme Cavaradossi dans *Tosca*, il écrit son dernier poème pour saluer la Muse de la poésie dans “Just like a day in May time” (page 8). Madeleine arrive. Elle soudoie le geôlier pour qu’il libère une autre prisonnière afin de prendre sa place et mourir avec Chénier.

Andrea Chenier fut représenté pour la première fois à La Scala de Milan en mars 1896. Le mois précédent avait vu la création à Turin de *La bohème* de Puccini, dirigée comme la création *Pagliacci* par Toscanini. Puccini fut le plus grand des successeurs de

Verdi, et tous ses opéras à partir du troisième, *Manon Lescaut* (1893), jusqu’à *Turandot* laissé inachevé (complété et joué en 1926 après la mort du compositeur), sont demeurés au répertoire.

L’action de *La bohème*, d’après un roman de Henry Murger, se situe à Paris vers 1830. Le poète Rodolfo partage une mansarde avec un peintre, un musicien et un philosophe. Tandis qu’il est seul, un coup à la porte annonce la venue de sa voisine, Mimì, dont la chandelle s’est éteinte. Pendant qu’ils cherchent la clé qu’elle a laissée tomber et que Rodolfo a mise dans sa poche, leurs mains se touchent. Dans “Your tiny hand is frozen” (page 16), il raconte sa vie de poète et l’exaltation provoquée par leur rencontre. Elle lui répond par “On m’appelle Mimì”, et ils sortent ensemble pour aller rejoindre les trois autres hommes au Café Momus.

La bohème fut suivi par *Tosca*, donné à Rome en 1900. L’action se situe à Rome exactement un siècle plus tôt. C’est de nouveau un triangle amoureux dans lequel Scarpia, le chef de la police, désire Floria Tosca, une cantatrice célèbre. L’amant de Tosca, Mario Cavaradossi, peint un portrait dans l’église de Sant’ Andrea Della Valle. Dans “How strange a thing is beauty” (page 11),

Cavaradossi oppose la beauté de la belle inconnue aux cheveux blonds de son portrait, observée pendant qu'elle priait, et la beauté de sa Tosca aux yeux noirs. La femme mystérieuse est la sœur d'un prisonnier politique, et c'est la tentative de Cavaradossi de l'aider à s'échapper qui provoquera finalement la mort des trois personnages principaux: Scarpia est assassiné par Tosca, Cavaradossi est exécuté au Castel Sant'Angelo, et quelques instants après, Tosca se jette du haut des remparts pour échapper aux agents de Scarpia.

Madama Butterfly suivit *Tosca*, et s'inspire d'une pièce de David Belasco que Puccini avait vue à Londres. Le compositeur utilisa une autre pièce de cet auteur pour son opéra suivant, *The Girl of the Golden West* (*La Fille du Far-West*). L'ouvrage fut créé au Metropolitan Opera de New York en 1910 sous la direction de Toscanini avec une distribution éblouissante incluant Emmy Destinn et Enrico Caruso. L'action se situe pendant la ruée vers l'or en Californie en 1849. Minnie, la fille du Far-West, joue aux cartes avec le shérif pour sauver la vie de son amant Dick Johnson, un bandit. Elle triche et gagne; mais plus tard Johnson est de nouveau capturé. Il doit être pendu sur l'ordre du shérif quand il chante "Let her believe that I have

gained my freedom" (page 12). Ce morceau est une supplication retenue et digne montrant l'une des caractéristiques du style de Puccini: la basse de l'harmonie suit note à note la ligne vocale. Minnie arrive pour sauver Johnson. Après un moment d'incertitude et un adieu chaleureux aux mineurs pour lesquels elle a été une figure maternelle, les deux amants s'éloignent à cheval dans ce qui est une fin heureuse rare pour Puccini.

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Traduction: Francis Marchal

Né au Pays de Galles de parents irlandais et gallois, **Dennis O'Neill** est l'un des plus grands ténors du monde et un spécialiste des œuvres de Verdi, dont il a chanté plus de vingt rôles de ténor. Il a entretenu une longue association avec le Royal Opera de Covent Garden où il a incarné de nombreux rôles tels que Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Duca (*Rigoletto*), Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Macduff (*Macbeth*), Gustavo (*Un ballo in maschera*), Foresto (*Attila*), Otello, Don Carlos, Radames (*Aida*), Carlo (*Giovanna d'Arco*), et Jacopo (*I due Foscari*). Il travaille également étroitement avec le Welsh National Opera.

Au Metropolitan Opera de New York, Dennis O'Neill s'est produit dans *La traviata* (Alfredo), *Aida* (Radames), *La bohème*, *Rigoletto*, *Cavalleria rusticana* (Turiddu) et *Pagliacci* (Canio). Il a également chanté au Chicago Lyric Opera, à San Francisco, San Diego, à l'Opéra de Vancouver, et a donné des concerts avec les orchestres de Philadelphie, Cleveland, Montréal, Ottawa, et a participé au Festival de Cincinnati. Il est fréquemment invité à se produire au Bayerische Staatsoper, et a chanté dans les opéras de Vienne, Berlin, Bonn, Cologne, Hambourg, Nice, Zurich, Paris, Oslo, Bruxelles, Barcelone, Oviedo, aux Arènes de Vérone et à Turin.

Dennis O'Neill donne également de nombreux concerts. Il est célèbre pour ses interprétations du *Requiem* de Verdi qui ont été télévisées non moins de sept fois. Il a chanté à travers toute l'Europe sous la direction de chefs tels que Muti, Sir Colin Davis, Sinopoli, Sir Simon Rattle et Sir John Pritchard. Sa vaste discographie inclut des albums solos, des vidéos de *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Macbeth* et *Mefistofele*. Pour la série "Opera in English" de Chandos, il a enregistré *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *La bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci* et des arias d'opéra. Dennis O'Neill a été fait

commandeur de l'empire britannique (CBE) en 2000.

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 *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *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*, l'enregistrement primé de *Tosca* et des extraits de *Der Rosenkavalier*, tous ces enregistrements étant réalisés en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation.



Dennis O'Neill as Jacopo and June Anderson as Lucrezia Contarini in The Royal Opera's production of Verdi's *I due Foscari*

Grandi arie operistiche

Il melodramma nacque in Italia alla fine del XVI secolo. Fu un tentativo deliberato da parte di un gruppo di nobili fiorentini di ricreare il mondo delle antiche tragedie greche, in base all'erronea teoria che esse fossero state interamente cantate. Il melodramma italiano conservò la propria superiorità per quasi tre secoli, tanto che nella Londra dell'Ottocento le opere scritte in tedesco, francese o anche inglese venivano regolarmente cantate in traduzione italiana. Ma, fatta eccezione per le opere di alcuni compositori stranieri quali Handel, Gluck e Mozart, il periodo più glorioso nella storia del melodramma italiano fu sicuramente quello compreso in questa registrazione, che va da Rossini a Puccini. Questa fu l'epoca che vide la scomparsa del soprano maschile nei ruoli eroici e l'emergenza del tenore nelle parti di innamorato e/o guerriero.

I tenori erano certamente numerosi a Napoli, dove fu rappresentata l'**Armida** di Rossini nel 1817. L'opera era stata commissionata dall'imprenditore Domenico Barbaia per l'inaugurazione del San Carlo, dopo la sua ricostruzione, e comprendeva sei

ruoli tenorili, anche se erano sufficienti quattro cantanti (due potevano assumersi un doppio ruolo). La parte di Rinaldo fu assegnata ad Andrea Nozzari, che l'anno precedente aveva interpretato l'*Otello* di Rossini; il ruolo di Armida andò all'amante di Barbaia, Isabella Colbran, che in seguito sarebbe divenuta la prima moglie di Rossini. La capacità di Dennis O'Neill di padroneggiare le grandi difficoltà di questo ruolo e la robusta musica di Verdi e del verismo dimostrano la sua superba tecnica.

La vicenda, ispirata a un episodio della *Gerusalemme liberata*, il poema eroico di Torquato Tasso pubblicato nel 1581, aveva già fatto presa su numerosi compositori, da Monteverdi a Haydn. Armida, maga saracena, è giunta a Gerusalemme per sedurre Rinaldo, campione dei cavalieri cristiani alla prima Crociata. Verso la fine dell'opera Carlo e Ubaldo riportano alla ragione l'infatuato Rinaldo, mostrandogli il suo riflesso in uno scudo. La prima parte del trio, "I lost the will to action" ("In quale aspetto imbellettato", traccia [5]), è un canone, dove ciascuna voce, a turno, esegue lo stesso motivo.

Nell'intervallo che va dall'ultima opera di Rossini, *Guglielmo Tell* (1828), e il primo grande successo di Verdi, *Nabucco* (1842), la scena fu dominata da Donizetti e Bellini. Come Rossini, Donizetti fu maestro del melodramma e dell'opera comica. **The Duke of Alba** è un esempio del primo o, piuttosto, lo sarebbe stato se Donizetti non l'avesse lasciato incompiuto il lavoro nel 1839. Dopo una controversia che coinvolse Ponchielli, compositore della *Gioconda*, l'opera fu completata, tra gli altri, da Matteo Salvi, allievo e amico di Donizetti, e fu eseguita a Roma nel 1882. La vicenda somiglia a quella dei *Vespri siciliani* di Verdi.

Il personaggio storico del Duca d'Alba è tristemente famoso per il trattamento brutale che riservò ai sudditi fiamminghi di re Filippo II di Spagna. Nell'opera Marcello di Bruges, che con la sua innamorata Amelia capeggia una ribellione contro gli Spagnoli, scopre con orrore di essere figlio illegittimo del Duca. "Angel of love divine!" ("Angelo casto e bello"), traccia [6]), una delle aggiunte di Salvi, arriva all'inizio dell'ultimo atto. Il padre di Amelia, a cui si fa riferimento nel recitativo di introduzione, è il patriota Egmont, soggetto del dramma di Goethe per il quale Beethoven compose le musiche di scena.

La carriera di compositore teatrale di Verdi durò oltre cinquant'anni, da *Oberto* (1839) a *Falstaff* (1893). **Attila** (1846) fu commissionata dal Teatro La Fenice di Venezia, dove *Ernani* aveva riscosso grande successo due anni prima. Oltre all'Unno Attila i personaggi principali sono tre: Ezio, generale romano; Odabella, figlia del signore di Aquileia; Foresto, cavaliere di Aquileia. Attila è nemico di tutti e tre: Ezio si è visto rifiutare la proposta, disonorevole, di unire le forze contro l'imperatore romano; Odabella ha perso il padre in battaglia, ucciso da lui; Foresto è innamorato di Odabella.

Quando Odabella salva Attila dal veleno di Foresto solo perché vuole riservare a se stessa la vendetta, Attila giura di sposarla. Le seguenti complicazioni portano al trio "Foresto, my soul belongs to you" ("Te sol, te sol quest'anima", traccia [7]), dopo il quale Attila viene appunto pugnalato da Odabella e muore pronunciando parole simili a quelle di Giulio Cesare ("E tu, pure, Odabella?").

L'opera successiva composta da Verdi per La Fenice fu *Rigoletto* (1851). Il compositore aveva ormai conquistato la fama mondiale. Il **trovatore** (1853), basato su un dramma di Antonio Garcia Gutierrez, già utilizzato da due altri compositori, fu rappresentato per la prima

volta al Teatro Apollo di Roma. Ambientato nella Spagna del Quattrocento, si impenna sulla rivalità tra Manrico e il conte di Luna per l'amore di Leonora. In "When holy church has blessed our love" ("Ah sì, ben mio", traccia [4]) Leonora sta per sposare Manrico, il trovatore del titolo. Il loro colloquio amoroso, accompagnato dall'organo nella cappella adiacente, viene bruscamente interrotto dalla notizia che Azucena, la zingara che Manrico pensa sia sua madre, sta per essere condotta al rogo. Manrico abbandona eroicamente le nozze per correre a salvarla, ma solo dopo aver cantato la sua cabaletta "That fierce inferno", ("Di quella pira") con il suo famoso do di petto fuori dai canoni. Il tentativo fallisce: Leonora si avvelena e Manrico viene giustiziato dal conte che si rivela essere suo fratello.

Nell'ambito delle celebrazioni per festeggiare l'apertura del canale di Suez, il viceré d'Egitto costruì un teatro lirico al Cairo che fu inaugurato nel 1869 con una rappresentazione del *Rigoletto*. Verdi aveva declinato la richiesta di comporre un inno per inaugurare le celebrazioni, ma dopo alcuni tentativi di persuasione accettò di comporre *Aida* (1871), opera di ambientazione egiziana, in parte perché gli fu abilmente comunicato

che la commissione sarebbe potuta andare invece a Gounod o Wagner.

Come nel *Trovatore*, la situazione si impenna su un triangolo amoroso, rovesciato in questo caso. L'Egitto e l'Etiopia sono in guerra: in "I pray that I be chosen", (traccia [3]), Radames spera di essere nominato comandante dell'esercito dei difensori dell'Egitto e in "Goddess Aida" ("Celeste Aida") canta del suo amore per Aida, schiava etiope di Amneris, figlia del re d'Egitto.

Radames ritorna vincitore con i suoi prigionieri; uno di essi è il re d'Etiopia Amonasro, padre di Aida. Amonasro cela la propria identità e in seguito convince Aida a farsi rivelare con l'inganno da Radames l'itinerario che il suo esercito prenderà il giorno dopo. La trama viene scoperta: Amonasro viene ucciso, Aida fugge e Radames viene arrestato. Amneris si offre di risparmiare la vita di Radames a condizione che rinunci ad Aida. Radames rifiuta; al processo si chiude in un assoluto mutismo e viene condannato ad essere sepolto vivo. Nell'ultima scena Aida lo raggiunge di nascosto nella tomba ed entrambi muoiono l'uno tra le braccia dell'altra.

Ci fu un lungo intervallo tra *Aida* e la prima di *Otello* nel 1887, interrotto dal *Requiem* nel 1874 e dalle revisioni di *Simon*

Boccanegra e *Don Carlos* all'inizio del decennio del 1880. Il fatto che Verdi componesse *Otello* è dovuto alla tenacia e all'astuzia di Giulio Ricordi, suo editore, e di Arrigo Boito, autore del libretto.

Boito riuscì magistralmente ad adattare e ridurre la tragedia di Shakespeare e Verdi rispose con una musica che abbinava brani convenzionali con una nuova flessibilità del rigo melodico. Il grande duetto che conclude l'Atto II (traccia [2]) è un magnifico esempio dei primi. Iago ha convinto Otello che sua moglie Desdemona gli è infedele. Mentre la musica si avvicina al culmine, con la tripla esclamazione di "Blood!" Otello cade in ginocchio ed esclama "Yes, I swear by skies of marble" ("Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro"); la melodia viene poi ripresa da Iago.

Nell'Atto IV, Otello soffoca l'innocente Desdemona; poi, quando capisce di essere stato ingannato, si pugnala (traccia [10]). Le sue parole, "Do not fear me" ("Niun mi tema"), sono in recitativo libero; il lirismo ritorna nella frase oscillante che accompagna il bacio, un secondo e ultimo riferimento al duetto d'amore dell'atto I.

Boito fu autore del libretto per l'ultima opera di Verdi: *Falstaff*. Tuttavia, molti anni prima di *Otello*, aveva anche firmato quello de

La Gioconda con lo pseudonimo di Tobia Gorrio, anagramma del proprio nome. Il compositore era Amilcare Ponchielli, di cui si è accennato prima a proposito del *Duke of Alba*. *La Gioconda*, ambientata nella Venezia del Seicento, era ispirata a un dramma di Victor Hugo, uno degli autori prediletti per i melodrammi, dall'*Ernani* e dal *Rigoletto* di Verdi al musical contemporaneo *Les Misérables*, e fu rappresentata alla Scala di Milano nel 1876.

Enzo Grimaldi, principe genovese, è fidanzato con la cantante Gioconda, ma è ancora innamorato di Laura, una donna che aveva conosciuto a Genova e che oggi è moglie di un componente del Consiglio dei Dieci. Enzo, travestito da marinaio della Dalmazia, è arrivato a Venezia, dove è ricercato. Barnaba, spia del Consiglio dei Dieci, è anche lui innamorato di Gioconda, che lo ha respinto; nella speranza di migliorare le proprie sorti agli occhi della donna, ha organizzato un incontro tra Enzo e Laura. Mentre attende l'amata a bordo della sua nave, Enzo canta "Heaven and sea!" ("Cielo e mar!", traccia [2]), un'aria lirica di grande difficoltà, in due stanze quasi identiche.

Nel 1881 Ponchielli fu assunto al Conservatorio di Milano ed ebbe tra i suoi

alunni Mascagni e Puccini. Mascagni si mise in luce nel 1890 con **Cavalleria rusticana**, vincendo un concorso per un melodramma in un atto. Si tratta della prima di una serie di opere veriste di Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano e altri, in cui storie della vita dei proletari vengono trattate con colori vivaci.

Cavalleria rusticana, ispirata a un dramma di Giovanni Verga, si svolge in un paese siciliano il giorno di Pasqua. Turiddu, un giovane contadino, ha una relazione con la sua ex fidanzata, Lola, che oggi è sposata. La sua attuale fidanzata, Santuzza, rivela la tresca ad Alfio, marito di Lola. Dopo il famoso *Intermezzo*, Turiddu intona un brindisi con gli abitanti del villaggio: “Neighbours, with a glass I meet you” (“Viva il vino spumeggiante”, traccia [13]), un brano che ricalca la tradizione verdiana.

Alfio rifiuta di bere e sfida Turiddu a duello. In “Mamma, this new wine really is powerful” (“Mamma, quel vino è generoso”, traccia [14]), Turiddu chiede a sua madre di prendersi cura di Santuzza. Quindi esce per il duello e rimane ucciso. Mentre cala la tela, l'orchestra intona per l'ultima volta con un fortissimo all'unisono la frase che aveva annunciato il primo ingresso di Santuzza.

Pagliacci, di Leoncavallo, è abbinato a *Cavalleria rusticana* da tanto tempo che è facile dimenticare il fatto che la sua prima a Milano si svolse due anni dopo quella dell'opera di Mascagni, avvenuta a Roma. L'accoppiamento è giusto in quanto le storie e le ambientazioni hanno molto in comune e si verifica un fatto analogo quando uno dei personaggi di *Pagliacci* rivela a un marito l'infedeltà della moglie dopo essere stato respinto dalla donna.

Il marito è Canio, capocomico della compagnia itinerante; nel secondo atto, durante una rappresentazione di una commedia, la finzione cede il posto alla realtà e Canio uccide la moglie e il suo amante. Nell'aria che conclude il primo atto, “Put on your costume” (“Vesti la giubba”, traccia [1]), Canio esprime il suo tormento nel dovere recitare quando ha il cuore spezzato.

Umberto Giordano partecipò al concorso vinto da Mascagni; entrambi i compositori vissero a lungo dopo i loro primi trionfi; Giordano morì solo nel 1948. La trama della sua opera più famosa, **Andrea Chenier**, è una storia immaginaria sul poeta francese André Chénier, e i due brani inclusi sono entrambi esempi poetici convenzionali.

“One day, gazing at the splendour” (“Un dì all'azzurro e ben”, traccia [7]) è un brano dell'Atto I: Chenier è ospite di una festa organizzata dalla contessa di Coigny. Maddalena, figlia della donna, lo incita a recitare quello che oggi è noto come *Improvviso*. In una libera declamazione, che deve qualcosa al Wagner del *Lohengrin*, o addirittura al *Boris Godunov* di Musorgskij, il poeta contrappone alla bellezza del mondo naturale la spietatezza della chiesa, del governo e del suo pubblico aristocratico.

Alla fine dell'opera Chenier, ormai vittima della Rivoluzione, è in attesa di essere giustiziato. In “Just like a day in May time” (“Come un bel dì di maggio”, traccia [8]), come Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, lavora al suo ultimo componimento, in cui saluta la Musa della poesia. Arriva Maddalena, corrompe il carceriere perché liberi un'altra donna e si avvia con Chenier verso la ghigliottina.

Andrea Chenier fu rappresentato per la prima volta alla Scala di Milano nel marzo 1896. Il mese precedente si era svolta la prima de **La bohème** di Puccini, a Torino, diretta, come la prima di *Pagliacci*, da Toscanini. Puccini fu il più grande tra i successori di Verdi, e tutte le sue opere a partire dalla terza, *Manon Lescaut* (1893), fino all'incompiuta

Turandot (completata e rappresentata postuma nel 1926), sono rimaste nel repertorio.

La bohème, basata su un romanzo di Henry Murger, è ambientata a Parigi intorno al 1830. Rodolfo, poeta, vive in una soffitta con un pittore, un musicista e un filosofo. Mentre si trova da solo bussa alla porta la vicina Mimì, che gli chiede un fiammifero. I due si scambiano alcune parole; nel frattempo il lume si spegne e alla donna cade la chiave di casa. Mentre la cercano al buio le loro mani si incontrano. In “Your tiny hand is frozen” (“Che gelida manina”, traccia [16]), Rodolfo descrive la sua vita di poeta e poi chiede alla fanciulla di parlare di sé. La risposta è “Sì, mi chiamano Mimì” e i due infine escono insieme per raggiungere gli altri tre amici al caffè Momus.

La bohème fu seguita da **Tosca**, rappresentata a Roma 1900. La vicenda è ambientata appunto in questa città esattamente cento anni prima. Si tratta di un altro triangolo amoroso: Scarpia, capo della polizia, si è invaghito di Floria Tosca, famosa cantante. L'amante di Tosca, Mario Cavaradossi, dipinge un ritratto nella chiesa di Sant'Andrea della Valle. In “How strange a thing is beauty” (“Recondita armonia”, traccia [11]), Cavaradossi mette a confronto la

bellezza bionda della donna sconosciuta ritratta nel suo quadro, da lui osservata mentre si trovava in preghiera, con quella della sua Tosca dagli occhi neri. La misteriosa donna è sorella di un prigioniero politico che Cavaradossi tenta di aiutare a fuggire. Sarà proprio questo a provocare infine la morte dei tre protagonisti: Scarpia viene pugnalato da Tosca, Cavaradossi è giustiziato a Castel Sant'Angelo e, qualche secondo più tardi, Tosca si getta dagli spalti per non cadere nelle mani degli agenti di Scarpia.

Dopo *Tosca* venne *Madama Butterfly*, basata su un dramma che Puccini aveva visto in teatro a Londra. Un'altra opera dello stesso autore, David Belasco, fu la fonte dell'opera successiva, *The Girl of the Golden West*, rappresentata per la prima volta alla Metropolitan Opera di New York nel 1910, diretta da Toscanini e con un cast che comprendeva Emmy Destinn ed Enrico Caruso. L'ambientazione è l'epoca della corsa all'oro californiana del 1849. Minnie, la fanciulla del titolo, propone un poker allo sceriffo: la partita in gioco è la vita del suo amante, il bandito Dick Johnson. La donna vince con l'inganno, ma più tardi Johnson viene nuovamente catturato. Sta per essere impiccato su richiesta dello sceriffo quando

canta "Let her believe that I have gained my freedom", ("Ch'ella mi creda libero e lontano", traccia [12]). È una supplica composta e dignitosa, tipica di Puccini, con il basso dell'armonia che segue la linea vocale nota per nota. Minnie arriva per salvare Johnson e dopo qualche incertezza e un appassionato addio ai minatori per cui è stata una figura materna, i due si allontanano a cavallo in un lieto fine, raro per Puccini.

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Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Nato in Galles da padre irlandese e madre gallese, **Dennis O'Neill** è uno dei principali tenori a livello mondiale ed è specialista delle opere di Verdi, di cui ha interpretato più di venti ruoli diversi. Ha al suo attivo una lunga collaborazione con la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, dove ha cantato tra l'altro *La bohème* (Rodolfo), *Rigoletto* (Duca), *Madama Butterfly* (Pinkerton), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Edgardo), *Macbeth* (Macduff), *Un ballo in maschera* (Gustavo), *Attila* (Foresto), *Otello*, *Don Carlos*, *Aida* (Radames), *Giovanna d'Arco* (Carlo) e *I due Foscari* (Jacopo). Inoltre ha una collaborazione particolare con la Welsh National Opera.

Per la Metropolitan Opera ha interpretato *La traviata* (Alfredo), *Aida* (Radames), *La bohème*, *Rigoletto*, *Cavalleria rusticana* (Turiddu) e *Pagliacci* (Canio). Inoltre ha cantato alla Lyric Opera di Chicago e nei teatri di San Francisco, San Diego e Vancouver, è comparso con le orchestre sinfoniche di Philadelphia, Cleveland, Montreal e Ottawa e Festival Cincinnati. Il tenore è spesso ospite della Bayerische Staatsoper e ha visitato i teatri lirici di Vienna, Berlino, Bonn, Colonia, Amburgo, Nizza, Zurigo, Parigi, Oslo, Bruxelles, Barcellona, Oviedo, Arena di Verona e Torino.

Dennis O'Neill svolge anche un'intensa attività concertistica; è noto per le numerose esecuzioni della *Messa di Requiem* di Verdi, ripresa dalla televisione ben sette volte, e ha cantato in tutta Europa con direttori tra i quali Riccardo Muti, sir Colin Davis, Giuseppe Sinopoli, sir Simon Rattle e sir John Pritchard. La sua ricca discografia comprende album solistici, videocassette di *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Macbeth* e *Mefistofele*. Per la serie Opera in English di Chandos ha registrato, tra l'altro, *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *La bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci* e dischi di arie operistiche. Dennis O'Neill è stato insignito dell'onorificenza di Commander of the British Empire nel 2000.

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 vinti parecchi premi, tra cui il belga Prix Cecilia per la *Rosmonda*

d'Inghilterra di Donizetti. Per Chandos ha diretto una serie di registrazioni di arie d'opera (con Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Della Jones e Andrew Shore), nonché *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *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*, *Tosca* (vincitrice di un premio) e brani scelti da *Der Rosenkavalier*, tutte in collaborazione con la Peter Moores Foundation.

Dennis O'Neill as Radames in
The Royal Opera's production
of Verdi's *Aida*



from Pagliacci

Canio's Aria

Canio

- [1] Go on stage...
and my life broken in pieces...
I won't know what I'm saying...
how can I do it?
But no, you have to...
Force yourself!
Well!
(*angrily*)
Call yourself a man!
(*mocking*)
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! You're just an actor!
(*taking his head in his hands in despair*)
Put on your costume
and your wig and your make-up.
They pay their money,
and you must make them laugh.
If, in the play,
your lady takes a lover,
make it amusing,
be sure to raise a laugh.
You turn to laughter your pain
and betrayal,
you tell a story,
pull faces, play the part.
Ah! Make it amusing,
though your life has been shattered.
Who wants to know
that grief has poisoned your heart.

*Leoncavallo, English version by Edmund Tracey
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from La Gioconda

Enzo's Aria

Enzo

- [2] Heaven and sea!
Like a radiant halo,
heaven shines on glittering sea.
Will my angel come from heaven?
Will my angel come from the ocean?
Here I wait for her,
the sighing breezes
speak of burning and ardent love.
Ah! Golden dreams,
dreams that I long for,
surely, some day,
you will come true for me!
Ah! Golden dreams,
sweet dreams of longing,
surely, some day,
you will come true for me!
Evening shadows falling,
slowly darkness is descending.
Heaven kisses far horizon!
Far horizon kisses Heaven!
In the twilight I wait impatiently,
my throbbing heart longs for you!
Come, my beloved,
come, let me hold you close,
come, let me kiss you,
Ah, let me hold you in my arms!
Come, beloved, I am waiting!
Can't you hear my beating heart!

Come, my love, let me kiss you,
and hold you close in love's embrace!
Ah, come, my love!

*Tobia Gorrio (Arrigo Boito),
translation by Natalie Peters*

from Aida

Radames' Recitative and Aria

Radames

- [3] I pray that I
be chosen and achieve my
dream of glory!
With a glorious valiant army
and I as leader...
Egypt victorious,... acclaimed
by the whole of Memphis!
To you my sweet Aida
I'd enter crowned with glory...
saying: 'for you I battled, for you I conquered!'
Goddess Aida, fair as a vision,
magic in beauty, glowing with light,
like some fair planet you shine above me,
you are the ruler of my whole life.
Home to your country I would return you,
back to the sweet-scented land you love:
then with a garland I would adorn you,
build you a throne nearer to the sun!
Home to your country I would return you
and let you savour the air you love.

*Christanzoni, translation by Edmund Tracey
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from Il trovatore

Aria and Cabaletta

Aria

Manrico

- [4] When holy church has blessed our love,
our hearts will grieve no longer,
a sterner faith will fire my soul,
my arm will fight the stronger.
But if within in the book of fate
my name has been recorded
as one of those who fall today,
alone and unrewarded,
then in that hour when death is near,
my thoughts to you will quickly fly.
Take heart, my love, and have no fear,
we meet again on high.

(*organ in a chapel close at hand*)

Leonora

The sound of solemn harmony...

Manrico

The sound of solemn harmony...

Leonora

...tells all the joy of faithful love!

Manrico

...the joy of faithful love!

Leonora and Manrico

Here we shall gain the grace and blessing of
heav'n above!

(Ruiz enters in haste.)

Ruiz
Manrico!

Manrico
Yes!

Ruiz
That gipsy, hurry, she's now their pris'ner.

Manrico
Oh heaven!

Ruiz
And Count di Luna's men have made a fire to
burn her.

Manrico
My strength has gone from ev'ry limb...
(approaching the window)
...darkness is closing round me.

Leonora
You're trembling!

Manrico
Leonora! ...Learn the truth... I am...

Leonora
Well, who?

Manrico
...her son!

Leonora
Ah!

Manrico
The villains! The thought of such a deed
drives me nearly mad with fury!
Go out there, Ruiz, and call our men to arms.
Go! Go! Hurry! Hurry!

(Exit Ruiz in haste)

Cabaletta
Manrico
That fierce inferno, her cruel sentence,
fire me with fever, set me aflame!
Ruffians repent this deed, or I'll have vengeance,
your blood shall wipe out insult and shame!
(to Leonora)

She loved me dearly, I'll not desert her;
all your entreaties I must deny.
Ill-fated mother, snared by that traitor,
I come to save you, save you or die.

Leonora
You cannot know how this has hurt me,
if you forsake me then I shall die!

(Exit with Inez)

Manrico
That fierce inferno, etc.

(Ruiz returns with Soldiers.)

Ruiz with Soldiers
To battle! To battle! May heaven guard us all.

Manrico
Ill-fated mother!
I come to save you, to save you or die.

Ruiz with Soldiers
We all are ready to fight beside you, to save her
or die.

Manrico
To battle, to battle, to battle!

Ruiz with Soldiers
To battle, to battle! Away to victory and triumph!
*(Exit Manrico in haste, followed by Ruiz and the
Soldiers, amid a din of arms, the trumpet calling to
battle.)*

*Cammarano, translation by Tom Hammond
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from Attila

Trio of Odabella, Foresto and Ezio

Odabella
[5] Foresto, my soul belongs to you
though Fate has kept us far apart,
trust me now, believe this faithful heart
always was true to you.

Foresto
How can you keep deceiving me...
How can you keep on lying?
How dare you profess undying feeling of love
when not a word is true?

Ezio
You have no time to waste
in fruitless scenes of tears and jealousy.

Odabella
Believe me now, my love, trust and believe me.

Foresto
How could you lie to me, lie and deceive me?

Ezio
Follow events in haste until the sun breaks
through,
until the moment the sun breaks through! Yes!

Odabella
Ah, trust me now, believe me too,
this faithful heart is still true to you.

Foresto
How could you lie and how could you deceive me
when not a word you have spoken is true?
Solera & Piave, translation by Robert David Macdonald

from The Duke of Alba

Marcello's Recitative and Aria

Marcello
[6] Here, unobserved in this chapel,
this place of lonely devotion,
a haven of weeping,
filled with echoes of suffering,
where every evening she comes to pray for her
father:
here I shall wait, wait for my love!

Angel of love divine!
No, never let the pain
of fear's remorseless call

disturb the sweetness of her soul.
 May heaven hear my prayer
 our fortunes on earth to share:
 let joy be hers and sorrow mine!
 But, if I should be banished
 and far from you should perish,
 I beg that you, my Amelia,
 may never curse my name:
 as I lie dying
 my thoughts will fly to you again...
 Angel of love divine!
 No, never let the pain
 of fear's remorseless call
 disturb her kind, gentle soul.
 May heaven hear my prayer
 our fates on earth to share:
 let joy be hers and sorrow mine!
 Let joy on earth be hers and sorrow mine!
Scribe & Duveyrier, translation by David Parry

from Andrea Chenier

Chenier's Aria

Chenier

- [7] One day, gazing at the splendour of Heav'n's
 blue distance,
 around me, flowers and meadows were bathed in
 golden radiance,
 as from on high the sun shone in glory.
 The earth itself seemed a jewel of gold,
 a priceless treasure encased in the vault of Heaven!
 Deep from the earth came a sweet sensation,

as though the earth in her love, caressed me and
 kissed me.
 My heart cried out in joy 'I love you, you who
 caress me,
 divine in all your beauty, my native land.
 Then full of love, my thoughts turned to prayer!
 I entered a church in the city;
 a priest stood by the shrine of the Virgin,
 and at that sacred altar he collected offerings...
 Yet when a starving old beggar held his hand out
 for bread
 he was rejected, in vain was all his pleading!
 I passed a peasant's wretched dwelling;
 and there I heard a man as he was cursing Heaven!
 Burdened by his heavy taxes,
 he could not feed his children!
 His starving family cried out in desperation!
 But to rich lords and ladies misery means
 nothing at all!
 Among those empty faces only in your eyes did I
 see a spark of pity
 and when I looked at you I saw an angel bright
 and shining!
 There before me stood the soul of beauty!
 But then, with your words of derision,
 a new grief filled my soul and tortured all my
 being...
(He breaks off and looks at Madeleine tenderly.)
 I beg you, lovely lady, do not scorn and deride
 the words of poets!
 Believe me, you know nothing of love,
 heavenly blessing!

No, do not mock the precious meaning of life
 which is love!

*Illica, translation by Tom Hammond
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from Andrea Chenier

Chenier's Improvviso

Chenier

- [8] Just like a day in May time
 with a soft kiss of evening,
 borne aloft by the breezes
 to heaven's distant dominions;
 so with a kiss of compassion,
 the Muse so true and tender,
 grants me this final poem,
 e'er I to death surrender!
 The path shining before me,
 the path that each must follow,
 all too soon seems to cull me,
 as my last hour approaches.
 It well may be,
 before my pen has written
 these poor verses,
 the voice of death will summon me
 to leave this world forever!
 Hail! Goddess proud and immortal!
 Once again fire your humble servant
 with bright and radiant fancies,
 as in the days long vanished.
 In that hour, when it's ordained we must part,
 then and forever,

Oh, take in homage
 the parting sigh of your dying poet!

*Illica, translation by Tom Hammond
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from Otello

Otello and Iago's Duet

Otello

- [9] Ah! Would that God had given him a thousand
 lives!
 One alone won't suffice for all my hatred!
 Iago, my heart is frozen,
 and I renounce every last shred of pity.
 All of my wasted love I throw to heaven;
 watch it go, it's vanished.
 With its writhing coils the monster destroys me!
 Ah, blood! Blood! Blood!
 Yes, I swear by skies of marble,
 by the twisted lightning flash,
 and by Death itself
 and by the dark pitiless sea!
 From my rage and savage vengeance
 sudden flames of sulphur leap from this hand.
(lifting his hands to the sky)
 See how I raise it!

Iago

No, sir, don't get up.
 May the sun be my glorious witness,
 source of my strength and source of life
 for the earth and all its vast and mystic universe,

to Otello I swear allegiance,
heart and hand and soul are his,
even though he calls for vengeance,
though he cries for blood!

Otello and Iago

Yes, I swear by skies of marble,
by the twisted lightning flash,
and by Death itself
and by the dark, pitiless sea.
From my rage and savage vengeance
sudden flames of sulphur leap from this hand.
See how I raise it!
God, God of revenge!

Boito, after Shakespeare, translation by Tom Phillips

from Otello

Otello's Death

Otello

- [10] Do not fear me, though you see that I'm still
armed.
Life's journey's over, I've reached the end.
Oh, glory! Otello's done.
(He goes to the bed, looking at Desdemona.)
And you... How very pale you are!
And weary, and silent, and lovely,
gentlest of creatures, born under a star of malice.
Cold now that your chaste life has left us to go
to heaven.
Desdemona! Desdemona! Ah! Dead! Dead! Dead!
(taking a dagger from his cloak?)

One weapon more!
Before I killed you, dearest, I kissed you.
Now I'm dying in shadows growing deeper.
A kiss, again a kiss. Ah, another...

Boito, after Shakespeare, translation by Tom Phillips

from Tosca

Cavaradossi's Recitative and Aria

Cavaradossi

- [11] Give me my palette!
(The Sacristan obeys. Cavaradossi begins to paint rapidly, often pausing to study his work: the Sacristan comes and goes, carrying a small basin in which he continually washes brushes. Suddenly Cavaradossi stops painting: from his pocket he takes a medallion containing a miniature and his eyes wander from the medallion to the picture.)
How strange a thing is beauty,
in its differing faces!
So dark my Floria,
so passionate and loving.

Sacristan (grumbling)

(To hear this heathen scorn the laws of Heaven!)

(He goes and gets water to clean the brushes.)

Cavaradossi

And you, my golden beauty,
in your innocent sweetness!
You have smiling blue eyes,
Tosca's blaze so darkly!

Sacristan (returning from the back and still shocked)

(To hear this heathen scorn the laws of Heaven!)

(He continues washing the brushes.)

Cavaradossi

Art is a strange enigma,
with the power to blend all kinds of beauty;
but though I paint the fair one
all my thoughts are of Tosca;
ah, my thoughts are all of you,
Tosca, of you!

Sacristan

They're all the same, these women,
who think they can compete
with the Madonna,
they all stink of the devil.
(Cavaradossi continues painting. He dries the washed brushes, grumbling to himself.)
(To hear this heathen scorn the laws of Heaven!)

Free-thinking dogs, atheists and schemers,
who set themselves against the Holy Office!

They're too far gone in evil!

To hear this heathen scorn the laws of Heaven!
They're nothing but incorrigible sinners!
(He lays the basin down under the scaffolding and puts the brushes in a pot near the picture.)
So let us make the sign against the devil.)

*Giacosa & Illica, translation by Edmund Tracey
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from The Girl of the Golden West

Johnson's Aria

Johnson

- [12] Let her believe that I have gained my freedom,
leading the better life that she has taught me!
Let her await my coming...
The days will pass away and I shall not return...
Minnie, star of my wasted life that lights my
journey,
Minnie, true heart that loved me so dearly!
Ah! Star that lights my journey, in life or death!

*Civinini & Zangarini, translation by R.H. Elkin
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from Cavalleria rusticana

Turiddu's Drinking Song

Turiddu

- [13] My friends, don't go away:
(joyfully)
Let's have a drink together!
(They all come to the table and take drinking cups.)
Neighbours, with a glass I meet you.
Pour the wine and come to treat you.
What are friends if they can't greet you
with a laughter full of joy?
Long live wine that flows to cheer you.
Make life happy for all those near you!
Long live wine that flows to fire you,
may the wine inspire you all!

Chorus

Viva! Viva!

Turiddu (*He drinks.*)

To all your lovers!

Lola (*to Turiddu*)

I drink to your good fortune!

Turiddu

Your health!

Chorus

Viva! Your health! I drink to you my brother!

Lola, Turiddu and Chorus

Neighbours, with a glass I meet you.

Pour the wine and come to treat you.

What are friends if they can't greet you
with a laughter full of joy?

Long live wine that flows to cheer you.

Make life happy for all those near you!

Long live wine that flows to fire you...

may the wine inspire you all!

Long live wine!

Viva, Viva! Drink up! Long live wine!

Drink up!

*from Cavalleria rusticana***Turiddu**

- [14] Mamma, mamma, this new wine really is
powerful... This evening... surely. I must have
drunk too many glasses... I had better be
going.

But first, dear mother, comfort me and bless me,
as on that day I left to join the army.

And one thing, mamma, remember... if I should
never see you again...

Love my poor Santuzza, ah, love her like a
mother...

For I made a promise that one day we'd be
married.

Love her like a mother, my poor Santuzza.

If things go badly!

Lucia

I do not understand. What are you saying?

Turiddu (*with indifference*)

Oh nothing.

The wine is making me talk nonsense...

But pray to God to save me,

yes, pray to God to save me...

Dear mother, hold me tightly,

give me your blessing, try to forgive me...

Goodbye! If things go badly, always love my

Santuzza... dear mother, goodbye!

(*exit hastily*)

Lucia

Turiddu? What are you saying?

(*Lucia calls desperately.*)

Turiddu, Turiddu, ah!

(*enter Santuzza*)

Lucia

Santuzza!

Santuzza (*embracing Lucia*)

Mother Lucia!

(*The stage is filled with people, agitation and fear
on all faces. The people scan each other's faces and
ask questions. A woman's voice is heard in the
distance.*)

Lola

There's been a fight. Turiddu has had his throat
cut!

(*Women enter in terror, one of them cries. They
rush up. Voices in the distance are heard
approaching.*)

Santuzza and Lucia (*screaming*)

Ah!

(*Santuzza falls senseless. Lucia faints.*)

Chorus (*with terror*)

Ah!

*Extracts from Cavalleria rusticana
Original words by Guido Menasci and
Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti
English translation by Edmund Tracey
Music by Pietro Mascagni*

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BONUS TRACKS

*from Armida***Trio of Rinaldo, Carlo and Ubaldo****Rinaldo**

- [15] 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 La bohème***Rodolfo's Aria****Rodolfo** (*holding Mimì's hand*)

- [16] Your tiny hand is frozen!
Let me warm it into life.
Our search is useless. In darkness all is hidden.
But very soon now the moon will be shining
and in the moonlight our search will continue.
(*Mimì tries to withdraw her hand.*)
I beg you stay a moment
while I tell you very briefly
just who I am, what I do, and how I earn my
living. Shall I?

(Mimi is silent; Rodolfo lets go her hand, and when recoiling she finds a chair, into which she drops as overcome by emotion.)

All right, I am but a poor poet.
What's my vocation? Writing!
Is that a living? Hardly!

I'm poor but I am happy.
Ladies of rank and fashion
all inspire me with passion.
In dreams and fond illusions
or castles in the air...
Richer is none on earth than I!

Two lovely eyes have stolen
ev'ry precious possession from
my wealth of hidden treasures.

Your roguish eyes have robb'd me,
of all my dreams bereft me,
dreams so fair yet so fleeting,
fancies that are no more...

and yet I don't regret them.
For now is a moment of rapture,
a wondrous night waking!

Now you know all my story,
pray tell me yours. Won't you tell me who are
you?
May I not know?

*Illica & Giacosa, translation by
William Grist and Percy Pinkerton,
with amendments by David Parry*



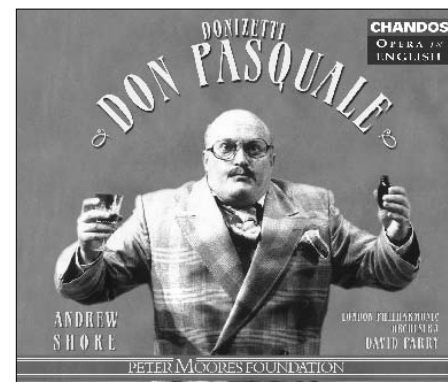
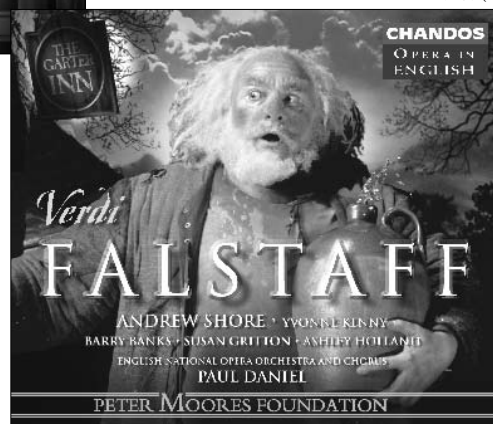
Dennis O'Neill as Turiddu
in Welsh National Opera's
production of Mascagni's
Cavalleria rusticana

Opera in English on Chandos



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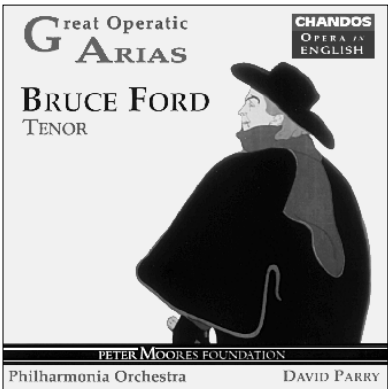


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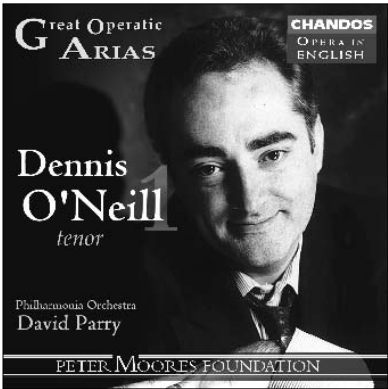
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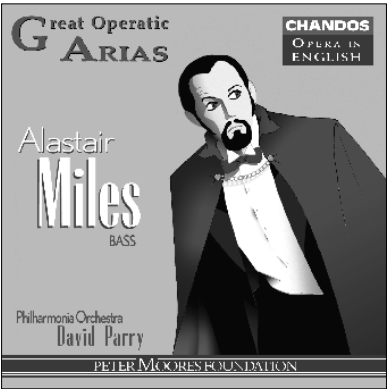
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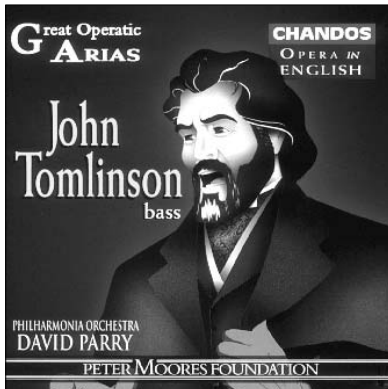


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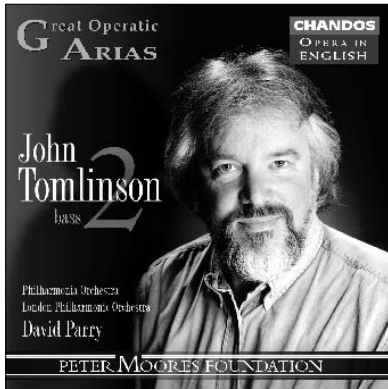
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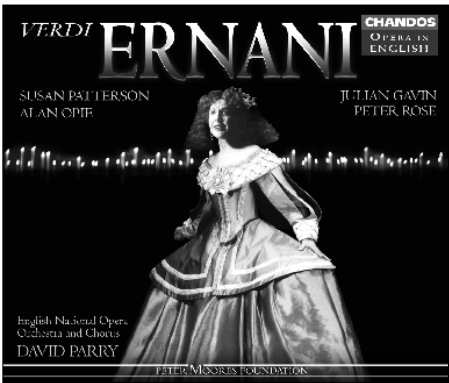


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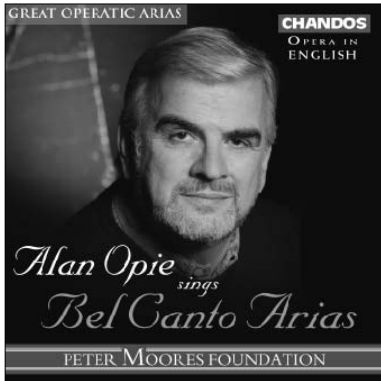
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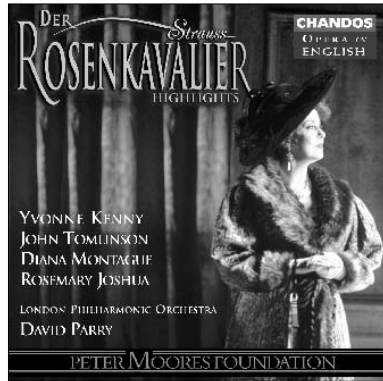
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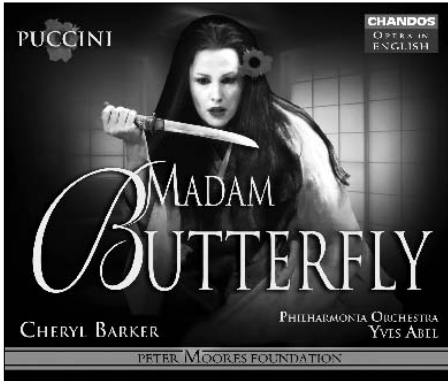
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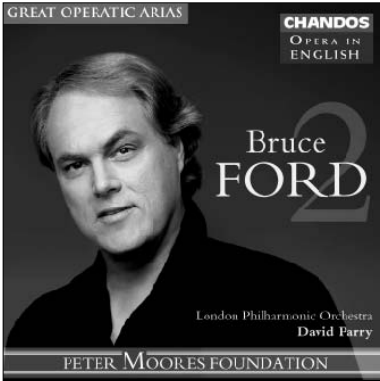
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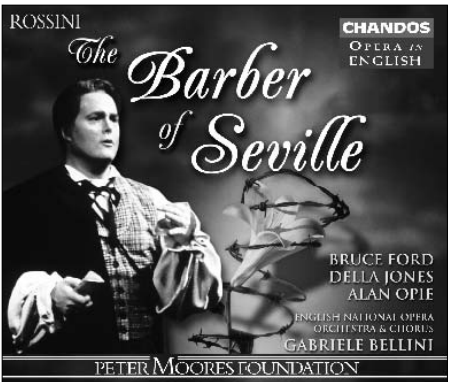


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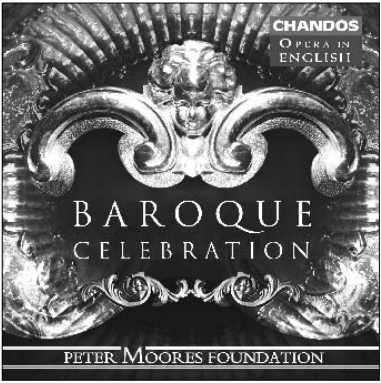
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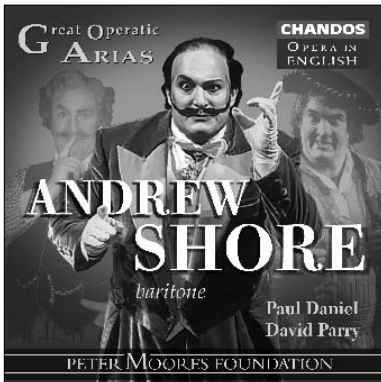
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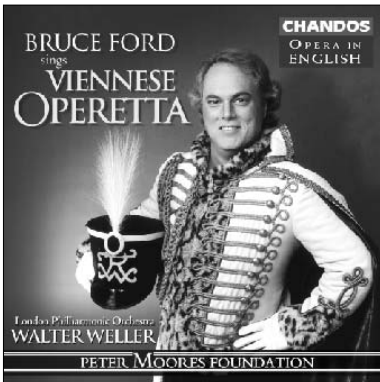
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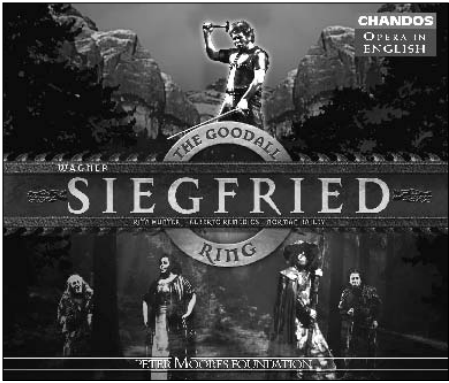
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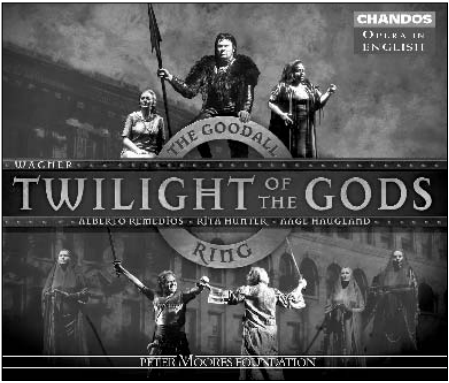
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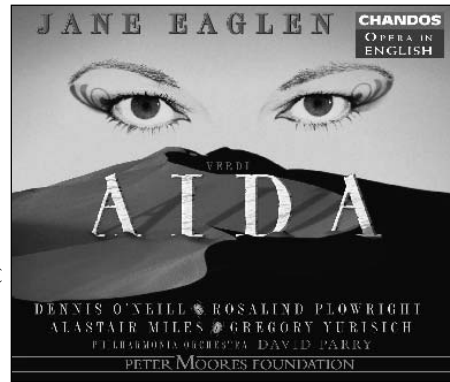
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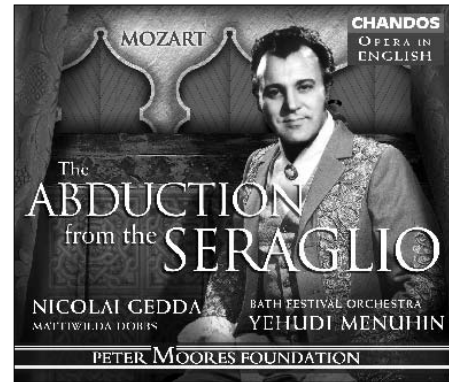
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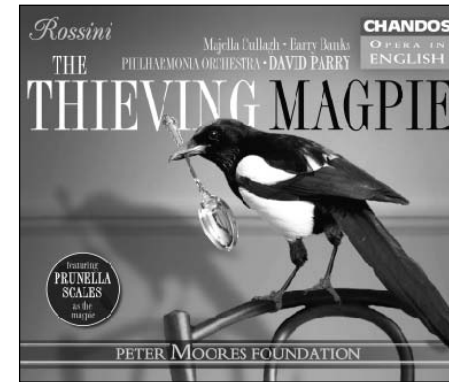
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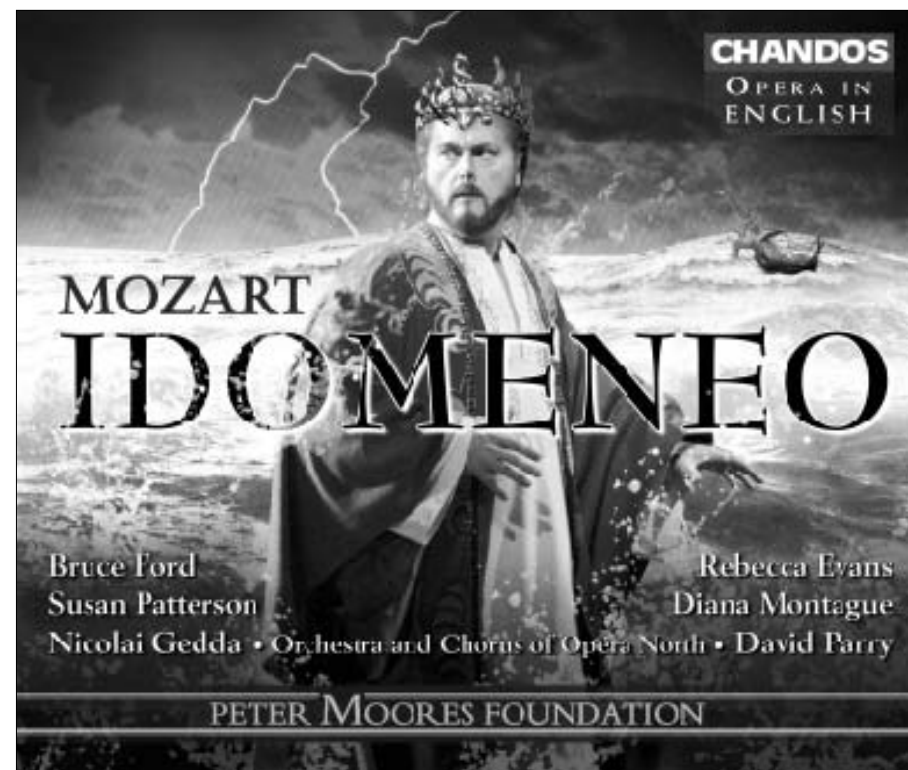


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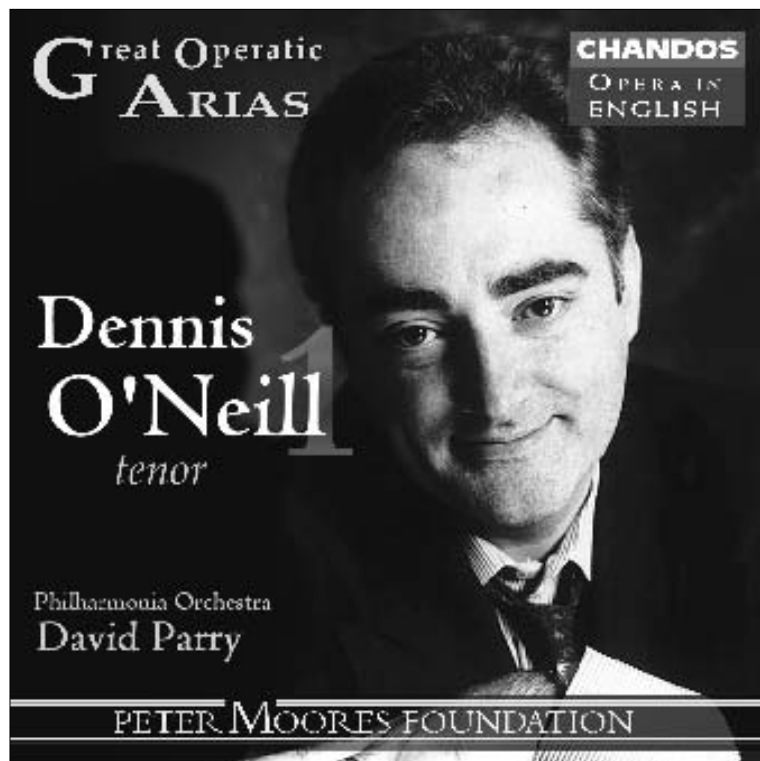
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Assistant engineers Matthew Walker (tracks 2, 5–10, 12 & 15), Richard Smoker (tracks 1, 4, 11, 13, 14 & 16) and Christopher Brooke (track 3)

Editors Rachel Smith (track 4) & Jonathan Cooper (all other tracks)

Operas administrator Sue Shortridge

Recording venue Blackheath Halls, London; 7–10 August 1997 (track 1), 3–7 March 2003 (tracks 2, 5–10, 12 & 15), 23–28 April 2001 (track 3), 16–20 December 1999 (track 4), 25–27 & 29–30 August 1995 (track 11), 3–5 August 1997 (tracks 13 & 14) & 3–7 September 1997 (track 16)

Front cover Photograph of Dennis O'Neill by Clive Barda

Back cover Photograph of David Parry by Russell Duncan

Design Sean Coleman

Booklet typeset by Dave Partridge

Booklet editor Kara Reed

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Publisher BMG Ricordi S.P.A., Milan/U.M.P. (tracks 2, 5–7, 9, 12 & 15) & Schott (track 8)

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GREAT OPERATIC ARIAS

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DENNIS O'NEILL SINGS MORE FAVOURITE TENOR ARIAS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 <i>from</i> Leoncavallo's <i>Pagliacci</i> (The Touring Company)
'Go on stage...' –
'Put on your costume' 3:48</p> <p>2 <i>from</i> Ponchielli's <i>La Gioconda</i>
'Heaven and sea!' 5:05</p> <p>3 <i>from</i> Verdi's <i>Aida</i>
'I pray that I be chosen' –
'Goddess Aida' 4:39</p> <p>4 <i>from</i> Verdi's <i>Il trovatore</i> (The Troubadour)
'When holy church has blessed our love' –
'That fierce inferno, her cruel sentence' 8:43
with Sharon Sweet soprano, Marc Le Brocq tenor and
Geoffrey Mitchell Choir</p> <p>5 <i>from</i> Verdi's <i>Attila</i>
'Foresto, my soul belongs to you' 3:09
with Janice Watson soprano and Alan Opie baritone</p> <p>6 <i>from</i> (Donizetti's) Salvi's <i>The Duke of Alba</i>
'Here unobserved in this chapel' –
'Angel of love divine!' 6:21</p> <p>7 <i>from</i> Giordano's <i>Andrea Chenier</i>
'One day, gazing at the splendour of Heav'n's
blue distance' 4:36</p> <p>8 'Just like a day in May time' 3:03</p> <p>9 <i>from</i> Verdi's <i>Otello</i>
'Ah! Would that God had given him a thousand lives!' –
'Yes, I swear by skies of marble' – 2:58
with Alan Opie baritone</p> <p>10 'Do not fear me' 5:34</p> | <p>11 <i>from</i> Puccini's <i>Tosca</i>
'Give me my palette!' –
'How strange a thing is beauty' 4:04
with Andrew Shore baritone</p> <p>12 <i>from</i> Puccini's <i>The Girl of the Golden West</i>
'Let her believe that I have gained my freedom' 2:20</p> <p>13 <i>from</i> Mascagni's <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i> (Rustic Chivalry)
'My friends, don't go away' –
'Neighbours, with a glass I meet you' 2:56
with Diana Montague mezzo-soprano and
Geoffrey Mitchell Choir</p> <p>14 'Mamma, mamma, this new wine really is
powerful' 5:56
with Nelly Miricioiu soprano, Diana Montague mezzo-soprano,
Elizabeth Bainbridge contralto and Geoffrey Mitchell Choir</p> <p>BONUS TRACKS</p> <p>15 <i>from</i> Rossini's <i>Armida</i>
'I lost the will to action' 3:23
with Bruce Ford tenor and Barry Banks tenor</p> <p>16 <i>from</i> Puccini's <i>La bohème</i>
'Your tiny hand is frozen' 3:09</p> |
|--|--|

TT 72:52

Dennis O'Neill tenor
London Philharmonic Orchestra

(tracks 1, 2, 4–10 & 12–15)

Philharmonia Orchestra (tracks 3, 11 & 16)

David Parry

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