

CHAN 3116(2)





Lebrecht Collection

Giuseppe Verdi

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

A Masked Ball

Melodramma in three acts

Libretto by Antonio Somma, English translation by Amanda Holden

Gustavus III, King of SwedenDennis O'Neill *tenor*
Count Anckarstroem, Gustavus's friend.....Anthony Michaels-Moore *baritone*
Amelia, Anckarstroem's wifeSusan Patterson *soprano*
Ulrike Arvidson, a fortune tellerJill Grove *mezzo-soprano*
Oscar, the King's pageLinda Richardson *soprano*
Count Ribbing, conspirator against the KingChristopher Purves *baritone*
Count Horn, conspirator against the KingBrindley Sherratt *bass*
Cristian, a sailor in the King's Navy.....Roland Wood *baritone*
Amelia's Servant/Lord Chief Justice.....Ashley Catling *tenor*

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Stuart Stratford assistant conductor

David Parry

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COMPACT DISC ONE		
1 Prelude	4:04	[p. 96]
Act I		
Scene 1		
2 'Rest Gustavus, may sweet dreams restore you' <i>Officers, Gentlemen, Ribbing, Horn, Henchmen</i>	1:37	[p. 96]
3 'The King approaches' <i>Oscar, Gustavus</i>	1:41	[p. 96]
4 'There shall I gaze in ecstasy' <i>Gustavus, Ribbing, Horn, Henchmen, Oscar, Officers, Gentlemen</i>	2:03	[p. 96]
5 'Go with the others and wait until I call you' <i>Gustavus, Oscar, Anckarstroem</i>	2:30	[p. 97]
6 'Please reflect upon your duty' <i>Anckarstroem</i>	2:41	[p. 98]
7 'The Lord Chief Justice!'	1:30	[p. 98]
8 'She conjures from afar, thunder and lightning' <i>Oscar, Gustavus, Lord Chief Justice</i>	1:50	[p. 98]
9 'My friends, will you come with me' <i>Gustavus, Anckarstroem, Oscar, Ribbing, Horn</i>	0:49	[p. 99]
10 'We can all go and see her together' <i>Gustavus, Anckarstroem, Oscar, Ribbing, Horn, Henchmen</i>	2:06	[p. 99]
Scene 2		
11 'Quiet... her trance must not be interrupted...' <i>Women, Children, Ulrike</i>	3:47	[p. 100]
12 'I'm first to be here!' <i>Gustavus, Women, Children, Ulrike</i>	2:30	[p. 101]
13 'Allow me to enter' <i>Cristian, Ulrike, Gustavus</i>	0:58	[p. 101]

	Time	Page
14 'You can rest assured' <i>Ulrike, Cristian, Gustavus, Women, Servant</i>	2:12	[p. 101]
15 'What brings you here to me?'	1:26	[p. 102]
16 'Step out towards the sunset' <i>Ulrike, Amelia, Gustavus</i>	1:20	[p. 103]
17 'Oh, help me, God in heaven' <i>Amelia, Ulrike, Gustavus, Voices</i>	2:05	[p. 103]
18 'Rise, great enchantress, speak to us all' <i>Ribbing, Horn, Men, Oscar, Gustavus</i>	0:44	[p. 104]
19 'Do you see the furious billows abating' <i>Gustavus, Oscar, Chorus</i>	2:53	[p. 104]
20 'Reckless stranger, your words are defiant' <i>Ulrike, Gustavus, Ribbing, Oscar</i>	2:29	[p. 105]
21 'Her crazy crystal-gazing' <i>Gustavus, Ulrike, Ribbing, Horn, Oscar, Chorus</i>	3:29	[p. 106]
22 'One thing you've yet to tell me' <i>Gustavus, Ulrike, Oscar, Chorus, Ribbing, Horn, Anckarstroem, Cristian</i>	4:09	[p. 106]
Act II		
23 [Prelude]	2:04	[p. 108]
24 'Here I am in this place of retribution'	1:25	[p. 108]
25 'When I pluck these dark stems' <i>Amelia</i>	4:58	[p. 108]
26 'Here at last'	1:22	[p. 109]
27 'You must know that I too have been aching'	4:03	[p. 109]
28 'The sweetest words I ever heard' <i>Gustavus, Amelia</i>	3:22	[p. 110]

	Time	Page
[29] 'Oh God! Someone is here!' <i>Amelia, Gustavus, Anckarstroem</i>	1:59	[p. 111]
[30] 'My friend, I ask you a personal favour' <i>Gustavus, Anckarstroem</i>	0:57	[p. 112]
[31] 'Do you hear how the menacing voices' <i>Amelia, Anckarstroem, Gustavus</i>	2:05	[p. 112]
[32] 'Stay close to me' <i>Anckarstroem, Amelia, Conspirators, Ribbing, Horn</i>	2:20	[p. 113]
[33] 'We interrupt their stolen kisses' <i>Ribbing, Horn, Anckarstroem, Amelia, Conspirators</i>	4:40	[p. 114]

TT 78:24

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act III

Scene 1

[1] 'Your offence is not forgiven' <i>Anckarstroem, Amelia</i>	2:11	[p. 116]
[2] 'I go, but in compassion' <i>Amelia, Anckarstroem</i>	4:22	[p. 117]
[3] 'Stand up! I permit you to see your son'	1:59	[p. 117]
[4] 'Shame on you, who defiled my beloved' <i>Anckarstroem</i>	4:05	[p. 117]
[5] 'We are gathered. Now hear me' <i>Anckarstroem, Horn, Ribbing</i>	1:21	[p. 117]
[6] 'I'm with you'	1:07	[p. 118]
[7] 'Let us all by our shame be united' <i>Anckarstroem, Ribbing, Horn</i>	0:48	[p. 118]

	Time	Page
[8] 'One indulgence I ask of you' <i>Anckarstroem, Ribbing, Horn, Amelia</i>	4:01	[p. 118]
[9] 'So which name has been chosen?' <i>Anckarstroem, Ribbing, Amelia, Horn</i>	1:17	[p. 119]
[10] 'Now Oscar may enter' <i>Anckarstroem, Oscar, Amelia, Ribbing, Horn</i>	1:05	[p. 120]
[11] 'Ah! I know that something wonderful' <i>Oscar, Amelia, Anckarstroem, Ribbing, Horn</i>	2:52	[p. 120]

Scene 2

[12] 'Perhaps she is safely home now'	2:35	[p. 121]
[13] 'But if your light is lost to me' <i>Gustavus</i>	2:36	[p. 121]
[14] 'Ah! She is there. How can I see her' <i>Gustavus, Oscar</i>	1:30	[p. 122]

Scene 3

[15] 'The hall is filled with laughter' <i>Chorus, Ribbing, Anckarstroem, Horn, Oscar</i>	2:10	[p. 122]
[16] 'Why are you caring?' <i>Oscar</i>	1:59	[p. 124]
[17] 'The hall is filled with laughter' <i>Chorus, Anckarstroem, Oscar</i>	1:49	[p. 124]
[18] 'Ah! You are here!...' <i>Amelia, Gustavus</i>	4:24	[p. 125]
[19] 'This is how I embrace you!' <i>Anckarstroem, Gustavus, Amelia, Oscar, Chorus</i>	1:14	[p. 127]
[20] 'She is blameless: as death approaches' <i>Gustavus, Amelia, Oscar, Anckarstroem, Chorus, Ribbing, Horn</i>	4:20	[p. 127]

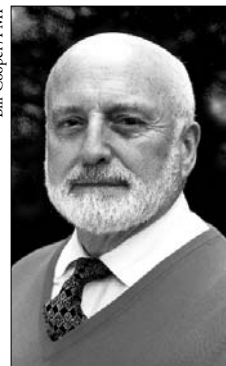
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Bill Cooper



Dennis O'Neill as
Gustavus III in Welsh
National Opera's
production of Verdi's
A Masked Ball

Bill Cooper/PMF



Masked Ball is bursting with melodies and vividly presented personalities, with Verdi reaching new heights in the way he blends and balances tragic and comic themes.

We have assembled a fantastic cast – I do hope you will enjoy it and that this will send you back to listen again (or purchase!) the other Verdi operas in our Opera in English collection: *La traviata*, *Il trovatore*, *Ernani*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Otello* and *Falstaff*.

Peter Hoopes

September 2004

Verdi: A Masked Ball

For years, the vocal score of *A Masked Ball* (its English title on the spine) was shelved in our local public library under 'Light Opera, Musical Comedy etc.'. A natural mistake, one might think, and indeed it draws attention to the rarely acknowledged point that the title is grimly ironical, almost a sick joke, like *A Night at the Theatre* for a play about the death of Abraham Lincoln.

A borrower who took the score home, to play at the piano or follow on records, might well also begin by thinking the category appropriate. The Prelude develops lyrically but opens with a skittish little triplet-like figure, playful, perhaps even cheeky, certainly comic rather than tragic in suggestion. No other of Verdi's operas starts this way, the very opposite (for instance) of *The Force of Destiny*, which follows it in the canon.

With curtain-up, too, the genial mode of light opera predominates. A few grumblings of conspiracy, an impassioned expression of love by the tenor (theoretically in private) and a gravely sympathetic note of caution from the baritone scarcely cast any deep shadow as yet. The mood is set by the elegant melody and

light accompaniment of the King's 'There I shall gaze in ecstasy' ('La rivedrà nell'estasi'), the chirpy daintiness of the Page's 'She conjures from afar' ('Volta la terra') and the rip-roaring finale of courtiers bent on enjoying a joke with the sibyl. The listener smiles, taps a foot and would like to join in. The library-borrower, doubting whether 'musical comedy' is quite the term for it, is nevertheless enchanted with this discovery of Verdi's captivating light opera.

'Now wipe that smile off your face!' It's as though Verdi, having begun the opera in his most beguiling manner, now with three tense chords slaps his hand down on the table. The major key suddenly and savagely turns minor. On stage the firelit gloom of the fortune-teller's hut replaces the splendours of Court. The sorceress Ulrike invokes the King of Darkness in deep tones unlike anything heard up to now. Her song tells of groans from beyond the grave, and the music's chromaticism crawls like a supernatural frisson over the skin of the living. This is the place and this the person assigned by the courtiers for their joke-jaunt; but we are there before them, and what we have seen is no joke. The arrival of Amelia

suggests how intimately this diversion is bound up with the main plot, and the fate-driven music proclaims its seriousness. The smiles are gone; the happy idiom of that first scene is revealed as a comic mask, now snatched away. And though Gustavus, the King, seeks to re-establish conviviality with his lightly mocking barcarolle ('Do you see the furious billows', 'Di' tu se fedele') the stage is set for tragedy.

This is an opera of masks. The first scene wears its frivolity to disguise the realities of treacherous plots and dangerous passions. In the second, the King wears the mask of anonymity. Fortune, momentarily exposed in its true form by Ulrike's prophecy, dons the guise of Security as the doomed man shakes the hand of his trusted assassin.

Now, at the opening of Act II, Amelia seeks to find Nature's cleansing drug in the place of death. One thing that is certain in the listener's mind is that the music bodes ill. Perhaps it depicts the wild and dismal scene, or the turbulence of Amelia's emotions, but we feel it as portentous, creating a mood of high tension not just in the immediate present but for the unfolding action ahead. And Fortune finds yet another mask. After the terrors of the midnight bell and her visions of horror, Amelia takes comfort in the the hope of

Divine mercy, and then, with the King's arrival, in the warmth of human love. The most passionate Love duet in Verdi's entire output takes place in the shadow of the gallows, but the brief spell of happiness ends in disaster. As her husband approaches, Amelia lowers her veil; then, when the conspirators join them, lights are brought and the veil disastrously slips. Again the mask is off – and what stands revealed now still masks the truth.

In the Library scene in Act III, which is so much at the heart of the opera despite its hero's absence, the wronged friend and husband confronts the new reality of his life as he sees it. His aria ('Shame on you', 'Eri tu') turns from the fateful stirrings of its dramatic introductory bars hardened by the infusion of brass, to the more tender feelings of personal loss, the sweetness of times past represented by harp and flute. The true nobility of this woman whose unmasking has shown her in so falsely ignoble a light is given body in the grave simplicity of her aria ('I go, but in compassion', 'Morro, ma prima in grazia'). Again, in the whole of Verdi there is probably no solo which more movingly expresses a heartfelt urgency with such dignity of restraint. In both solos, it is the quality of the

music that determines our response, and though more dramatic developments are to follow, the serious depths of the opera are sounded here: it is in the dramatically static passages of aria that the uniquely operatic work is done, the evocation of powerful feelings in a dramatic context through music and the singing voice.

Masks are donned in earnest for the final scene. Before that, the King has his own solo, balancing in the trio of principals the great arias for Amelia and Anckarstroem. It is here that we come to know his true self – we've had the popular ruler, the joker, the gallant, the lover, but, genuine as all these have been (the music substantiates that), they are still aspects, whereas here is the man himself. This is not – or is only in a superficial sense – a matter of what the words say: it is the music that makes real the agony of his decision to send his friend Anckarstroem and Amelia away, ('Ah, I have signed it') and the sublimation of his still painful desires. This is the man without a mask. But that is to be enforced eventually by a still more powerful stroke of metamorphosis in the score at what is to be the musical and emotional climax of the opera.

The catastrophe is effectively managed. Just as the device of a play-within-a-play effectively

intensifies the illusion of dramatic reality (*that* was fiction, *this* is fact), so the interpolation of stage-music can make us forget that the score itself is music for the stage: in both cases, the main representation, dramatic and/or musical, takes a step closer to acceptance as reality. At the masked ball, the court band is playing dance music at the moment of the assassination. The horrified guests stop dancing and gradually the band stops playing (the conductor and the fiddler next to him are probably the last people to realise what has happened). The 'real' score takes over, and the mortally wounded King gives his message of absolution. But the emotional climax comes as the voices rise in full ensemble catching the inspiration of the moment in three arched phrases, each higher and broader than the last. It is always powerfully effective in performance, even provoking an instinctive sense that this is some theme which, without our being quite aware of it, has permeated the opera and is now heard in its apocalyptic moment.

If so, it is for a very good reason: it happens to be true. These 'arches' are essentially melodic phrases of three notes, the middle one being the highest. It is a figure that has occurred at certain key moments throughout

the score, in the Love duet of Act II, for instance, Amelia's aria preceding it and the trio in the previous scene.¹ And though as remote as possible in mood and manner, the three-note figure is also that of the light, skittish triplet which opens the whole opera and is heard on-and-off throughout. This is the final lifting of the mask. A form of musical imagery, the three-note figure permeates the opera, appearing in many guises and finally, broadened and ennobled, is used to embody the tragedy to which everything has been moving.

Of all Verdi's operas, *A Masked Ball* has been the one most subject to misdirecting commentary. Of course there is plenty that can be said about the circumstances (personal and historical) of its composition, about the reception of its premiere and subsequent performances, about troubles with the censor and consequent changes made to the setting of the action and names of the characters. The opera was written in 1859, a crucial year in the struggle for Italian unification. The Austrians were driven from Lombardy and a national parliament was planned. The opera-loving Italians could cry 'Viva Verdi!' and mean it, but the fervour of their acclamation was gleefully reinforced by the common

knowledge that the composer's name could also be read as an acronym for 'Vittorio Emmanuele, Re d'Italia'. It was not surprising that the censors in the reactionary State of Naples should reject an opera which culminated in the assassination of a ruler; or that Verdi should take his work to Rome where a compromise was effected. The plot had originally centred on the assassination of Gustavus III of Sweden in 1792. This was comparatively recent history and the place not so very far from home. For the Rome premiere, the action was distanced in time and place, removed to seventeenth-century Boston. This, with Italian names for the leading characters, remained the standard performing version for more than a century, the Swedish setting being reinstated with increasing regularity from mid-twentieth century onwards.

Now, all of this has its interest; the pity is that producers, critics and scholars have focused attention on such matters as though they were central to an appreciation of the opera. To read some modern commentaries, one might assume that it is important to understand this chapter of Swedish history and, incidentally, to give weight to the notion that Gustavus was homosexual. The ideals of

the Risorgimento and general concerns about enlightenment and subversion are also canvassed in the modern critical endeavour to establish what the opera is 'about'. It is at least partly because of such preoccupations that *A Masked Ball* has been particularly subject to 'concept' stage-productions which at worst have so misled the mind through the eye that only a marginal, subsidiary function remains for the ear.

The perversity of this will be apparent to listeners who come afresh to the opera now in this English translation, just as it must be to those who know and love it through performances in the original Italian. Particular advantages of an English text for an English-speaking public include the likelihood of a clearer understanding of the conspiracy, the reason for the King's proposed visit to the Sorceress, and the details of warnings and recognition at the Ball. But in large measure the music and action tell their story together, whether in English or Italian. And without Verdi's music (though you would scarcely gather as much from most present-day reviews), the words and actions are artistically without value or power of survival.

A factor in the opera's survival is the glory of Verdi's writing for the singing voice. At a

time when such operas were out of fashion among people of culture and intelligence, the thrill of great singing still carried the show. As a whole, *A Masked Ball* failed to convince when it was revived at Covent Garden in 1919, but, as one critic reported 'Who cares a fig for dull convictions when Martinelli [Giovanni Martinelli, the tenor of that performance] is throwing at you treasures of tone in that prodigal fashion?' We think of all the great singers who have performed the three main parts, with occasionally outstanding achievements by the Oscar and Ulrike: these are part of the opera's cumulative inheritance. But, essentially, for what *A Masked Ball* is, you have to summon to mind its notes, the *sound* of it. The great arias, famous on records long before there was a single complete recording, tell much. The Love duet of Act II ('It is many a month since I heard such a spontaneous outburst of applause' writes the same critic about that performance in 1919) and the ensembles of Act I also rise thrillingly in the memory. And crowning all will be that sublime arching phrase, the soprano's voice touching the high C, in the scene of the King's death, which in turn binds up so much, through that three-note figure scattered throughout the opera. Verdi was under intense

pressure of time in composing *A Masked Ball*. He did it in two and a half months, and perhaps that helps to explain why, though none of his scores is more varied in its scope, none is possessed of a closer, more organic unity.

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¹The point has been developed more fully in the writer's essay on *Un ballo in maschera* in the Salzburg Festival programme, 1990.

A Masked Ball: a history

The history of Verdi's *Masked Ball* is somewhat chequered. By the beginning of 1857 the composer had agreed to write a new opera for the Teatro San Carlo in Naples. His first idea to write a work based on *King Lear*, to a libretto by Antonio Somma, fell by the wayside because of Verdi's disappointment with the theatre's singers. By September of that year he had come up with another suggestion: that Somma should adapt Eugène Scribe's libretto to Auber's opera *Gustave III, ou Le bal masqué*, which had been premiered in Paris in 1833.

After a synopsis was submitted to the censors in Naples in November, changes had

to be made; the location was moved from Stockholm, the King became a Duke, and the action moved back in time, with the title of the opera now becoming *Una vendetta in domino*. However, when the finished libretto was submitted to the censors in January 1858 further problems ensued. Shortly before the composer arrived in Naples in January 1858 with his opera to all intents and purposes completed, there had been an assassination attempt on Napoleon III in Paris, and it was clear that even the revised storyline would no longer be acceptable. The management at San Carlo came up with a new story, but Verdi rejected this, and his contract with the theatre was dissolved.

Verdi knew that a play had been produced in Rome on the subject of Gustavo III, and decided to try and produce his opera there. The censors did make certain stipulations, but compromises were reached, and the action was moved away from Europe to North America, King Gustavus becoming 'Conte di Warwick'. In September 1858 Somma sent the final libretto to Verdi, who had meanwhile re-cast portions of the opera. Fully completed by January 1859, the premiere took place at Rome's Teatro Apollo the following month.

Synopsis

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

Scene 1

[1] – [2] A group of courtiers and petitioners waiting for the King includes both his supporters and a number of malcontents, led by Count Ribbing and Count Horn, who are plotting the King's assassination. [3] – [4] When Oscar, the King's page, shows him the list of guests for his planned masked ball, he is excited to see the name of Amelia, the wife of his friend and secretary Anckarstroem. [5] Nobody knows of his secret love, and Anckarstroem interprets his moodiness as a justified fear of conspiracy. [6] Gustavus refuses to listen to Anckarstroem's warnings, preferring to trust in the love of his people to protect him.

[7] The Lord Chief Justice arrives, demanding that the King take action against Ulrike, a gypsy who, it is said, can see into the future. [8] Oscar gives a spirited defence of the woman, [9] – [10] which prompts the King to propose they go in disguise to visit Ulrike. They arrange to meet later that day at her hut.

Scene 2

[11] Ulrike, surrounded by women and boys, performs a Satanic ritual. [12] The King arrives in disguise. [13] When Ulrike prophesies a promotion for a young sailor, Cristian, [14] the King quickly writes a note on a roll of money and slips it carefully into the sailor's pocket. Thus Ulrike's prophecy is fulfilled, and those present acclaim her powers.

Amelia's servant enters, and requests an interview on behalf of his mistress. Ulrike sends away the crowd, but Gustavus hides [15] He is amazed when Amelia arrives. She has come to ask Ulrike's advice about her guilty love for the King. [16] Ulrike tells her to pick a herb at midnight beneath the gallows. [17] When she agrees to go, Gustavus, decides that he follow her there.

[18] – [19] The courtiers and Oscar arrive in disguise and taunt Ulrike. Disguised as a fisherman, [20] – [21] the King asks Ulrike to tell his fortune. Not knowing him to be Gustavus, she says that he is unlucky and, when pressed, predicts his death. [22] His murderer will be the next person to shake his hand. Anckarstroem, arriving late, greets the King, and so seems to contradict the prophecy, particularly since it is only now that Ulrike recognises her guest. She continues to warn him against conspiracy, but Gustavus ignores her.

Act II

[23] It is midnight beneath the gallows.

[24] – [25] Amelia has come to find the herb, and is tormented by her conflict between love and duty. [26] – [28] She is astonished when the King appears and declares his love for her. Although she emphasizes that she is married to his closest friend, in the end she has to admit that she returns his love.

[29] Anckarstroem surprises them together, but in the darkness does not recognise his wife. He has followed the King, aware of the risks that he is constantly taking. The conspirators are approaching. Anckarstroem persuades Gustavus to escape, while he wards off the conspirators. [30] – [31] After muffled pleas from Amelia, Gustavus agrees, on condition that his friend neither asks the woman her name, nor looks at her face, but escorts her within the city gates. Anckarstroem promises to honour this request, and the King leaves.

[32] The conspirators apprehend the people they take to be Gustavus and his new love. Discovering Anckarstroem, they try to force him to reveal the lady's identity. Amelia, terrified by the threat to her husband, lets slip her veil. Anckarstroem is appalled. [33] As the conspirators leave, full of laughter at his expense, he asks Ribbing and Horn to come to

his house the next morning. Anckarstroem escorts his wife back to the city.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act III

Scene 1

[1] Anckarstroem prepares to kill Amelia in revenge for her adulterous affair with the King. She admits her love for Gustavus, but insists that she has not betrayed her husband. [2] Her protestations ignored, she realises that death is inevitable and begs to say a last goodbye to her son. [3] – [4] Anckarstroem agrees and, left alone, he turns his anger against Gustavus, deciding that it should be the King who dies. [5] When Ribbing and Horn arrive, Anckarstroem tells them he knows of their conspiracy against the King, but asks to join them, [6] offering the life of his son as a pledge of good faith. [7] They decide to draw lots to decide who should strike the death-blow. [8] Amelia enters and Anckarstroem tells her that in a vase there are slips of paper with names on, and he orders her to choose one. [9] She draws her husband's name, and realises what is going on.

[10] – [11] Oscar enters with an invitation to a masked ball that evening, and Anckarstroem

accepts on behalf of himself and his wife. The ball will be the perfect opportunity to commit the murder. Together the conspirators decide on their costume and on a password: 'murder'.

Scene 2

[12] – [13] Gustavus has decided to send Anckarstroem and Amelia away from his court. [14] Oscar gives the King an anonymous letter warning him of the risk of assassination at the ball, but the King is determined to use the party as a chance to see Amelia one last time.

Scene 3

[15] – [17] At the masquerade. As it is a masked ball, Anckarstroem needs to find out from Oscar the King's disguise, which Oscar discloses. [18] Amelia also identifies Gustavus, but despite her pleading, she cannot persuade him to leave the party. They declare their love for each other, [19] but Anckarstroem throws himself between them and commits the planned murder. The masks are ripped off, revealing the assassin as Anckarstroem. [20] With his dying words Gustavus protests Amelia's innocence and pardons his friend. The people express their love for the murdered King.

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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. 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*).

For the Metropolitan Opera he has appeared as Alfredo (*La traviata*), Radames (*Aida*), in *La Bohème*, *Rigoletto*, and as 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 has appeared in São Paulo and Santiago. A frequent guest at the Bayerische Staatsoper,

Munich, he has appeared in *Un ballo in maschera*, *Il trovatore*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Tosca*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Aida* and *Otello*. Elsewhere in Europe 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. He enjoys a close relationship with Welsh National Opera and has a busy and varied concert career.

Dennis O'Neill's own television series for the BBC were enormously popular and he has subsequently completed a television film on Caruso, and another featuring famous movie themes. His many recordings include, as part of Chandos' Opera in English series, *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *La Bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, as well as two discs of Great Operatic Arias, and, with other companies, *La fanciulla del West* under Slatkin, Verdi's Requiem under Sir Colin Davis, and an anthology of Italian Song. Dennis O'Neill was awarded the CBE in the 2000 New Year's Honours list.

Anthony Michaels-Moore studied at Newcastle University and at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama with Eduardo Asquez, and now with Neilson Taylor. He was



the first British winner of the Luciano Pavarotti Competition in 1985. He has had a long and fruitful relationship with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden becoming a member of the Company, and

appearing in many roles including Belcore (*L'elisir d'amore*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Ping (*Turandot*), Ned Keene (*Peter Grimes*), Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Lescaut (Massenet's *Manon*), Stankar (*Stiffelio*), Scarpia (*Tosca*) and the title role in concert performances of the early version of *Simon Boccanegra*. He has returned as a guest to perform the title role in *Macbeth*, Count (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and Rolando (*Il battaglia di Legnano*).

For English National Opera he has sung Zurga (*The Pearl Fishers*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Count (*Figaro's Wedding*), Yeletsky (*The Queen of Spades*) and the title role in *Eugene Onegin*; with Opera North he has appeared as Escamillo (*Carmen*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Figaro (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Germont (*La traviata*), Posa (*Don Carlos*), and

in the title role of *Hamlet*. Welsh National Opera has seen him as Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*) and *Eugene Onegin*. Abroad he has appeared with Chicago Lyric Opera, at La Scala, Milan, with the Vienna State Opera, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, San Francisco Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Opéra de Paris and Opéra de Paris-Bastille, La Monnaie, San Carlo Napoli, Teatro Del Liceu in Barcelona, at Spain's Oviedo Festival, Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires.

On the concert platform, Anthony Michaels-Moore has sung under conductors such as Sir Colin Davis, Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir David Willcocks, Andrew Davis, Neeme Järvi, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, André Previn, Michael Gielen, Leonard Slatkin, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, John Eliot Gardiner and Sir Neville Marriner. His recordings include Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater*, *Carmina Burana*, *La vestale*, *The Fairy Queen*, and Mercadante's *Orzi e Curiazzi* for Opera Rara.

Susan Patterson has taken her place as a new leading lirico-spinto soprano with highly successful portrayals of Margarita/Helena in Boito's *Mefistofele*; Dvořák's *Rusalka*; a new



production of *Ernani* with the Reisopera in the Netherlands; Mme. De Tourvel (*Dangerous Liaisons*) and *Tosca* with the Washington Opera; Mimi (*La Bohème*) and *Aida* with the Baltimore Opera; and Manon Lescaut at the Spoleto Festival USA. She made her La Scala debut under Riccardo Muti in Cherubini's *Lodoiska*. She sang the Verdi Requiem with the Washington Opera under Plácido Domingo on the 100th anniversary of the composer's death and has appeared in a benefit concert in Monte Carlo with Luciano Pavarotti.

She has performed frequently with the San Francisco Opera in roles including Angelica (Vivaldi's *Orlando Furioso*), Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*), Constanze (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), and Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). In Europe, she has performed with the Netherlands Opera in *Le Comte Ory* and *Mitridate*, in Aix-en-Provence as Constanze, and with the Cologne Opera and Paris Opéra-

Comique in *L'occasione fa il ladro*. *La traviata* has been a dominant opera in Susan Patterson's career, and she has performed it throughout the USA, as well as with Vancouver Opera, Montreal Opera, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, and Canadian Opera Company.

Susan Patterson's concert appearances include Handel's *Jephtha* and *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Lisbon, and *Egmont* with the San Francisco Symphony under Kurt Masur. She has also sung Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* and Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

As part of Chandos' Opera in English series she has recorded the role of Elvira in Verdi's *Ernani*, and Electra in *Idomeneo*. Other recordings include *Le Comte Ory* and *Il matrimonio segreto*.

Jill Grove attended the Music Academy of the West, the New England Conservatory and Stephen F. Austin State University. She currently lives in New York and studies with Patricia McCaffrey.

Jill Grove's roles at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, have included Magdalene



(*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) conducted by Levine, Madelon (*Andrea Chenier*), Pantalís (Boito's *Mefistofele*), Emilia (*Otello*), and Mary (*Der fliegende Holländer*) conducted by Valery Gergiev.

Other American operatic appearances have included First Norn (*Götterdämmerung*) with Dallas Opera, Azucena (*Il trovatore*) with Tulsa Opera, Mistress Quickly (*Falstaff*) with Santa Fe Opera, and the world premiere of Tobias Picker's *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* for Los Angeles Opera. In Europe she has sung at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, with the Netherlands Opera (Deaconess in Szymanowski's *King Roger*), Welsh National Opera (Ulrike in *Un ballo in maschera*), and English National Opera (Marfa in *Khovanshchina*).

Jill Grove collaborates regularly with the world's leading orchestras and conductors. She has performed Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Atlanta, Houston and Detroit Symphonies. She has performed Mahler's Third Symphony at the Schleswig-

Holstein Festival and with the Houston Symphony, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* with the National Symphony Orchestra, and Bernstein's 'Jeremiah' Symphony at the Ravinia Festival. As a member of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, she has performed numerous roles with the company including Anne Kronenberg in the world Premiere of *Harvey Milk*, and Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* with Cecilia Bartoli.



Christopher Purves studied English at King's College, Cambridge before performing and recording with the highly innovative vocal rock and roll group, *Harvey and the Wallbangers*. With the group's demise in

1988, he resumed vocal training with David Keren, Diane Forlano and Janice Chapman.

His operatic engagements include Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) for Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera and Opera North; Marcello (*La Bohème*) for Scottish Opera; Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*)

for Welsh National Opera and Opera North; Podesta (*La gazza ladra*) for Garsington Opera; Siegfried (*Genoveva*) and Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) for Opera North. He created the role of Executioner in James Macmillan's *Ines de Castro* and has performed Macmillan's *Parthenogenesis* at the Edinburgh Festival, where he has also appeared as Cecil in *Maria Stuarda* under Sir Charles Mackerras.

Concert engagements include Mozart's Mass in C at Aix-en-Provence with the Sixteen, Monteverdi's *Vespers 1610* with Richard Hickox, Bach's B Minor Mass at the La Chaise-Dieu Festival, Handel's *Judas Maccabeus* in Nuremberg and *Saul* with the Gabrieli Consort at the Covent Garden and La Chaise Dieu Festivals, John Tavener's *Apocalypse* at the Proms with the City of London Sinfonia, *Les Mamelles de Térésias* with the London Sinfonietta under Sir Simon Rattle, Britten's *War Requiem* and Haydn's *Creation* with the Ulster Orchestra, and *Belshazzar's Feast* with the English Northern Sinfonia under Paul Daniel and with the Hallé. Christopher Purves gave his debut recital at the Aldeburgh Festival in June 2004. His recordings include the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Gottardo (*The Thieving Magpie*) for Chandos' Opera in English series.



Born in Lancashire, **Brindley Sherratt** studied trumpet and singing at the Royal Academy of Music.

His regular concert appearances include *St John Passion* with Trevor Pinnock in London and Lucerne,

Mozart's Requiem and C Minor Mass at the Swansea and York Festivals with Jane Glover and the London Mozart Players, *Judas Maccabeus* and Mozart *Vespers* at the opening of the Symphony Hall with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, *St John Passion* in Bonn, Stravinsky's *Les Noces* in Paris with Pierre Boulez and the Ensemble Intercontemporain, Stravinsky's *Canticum Sacrum* in Paris with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Dallapiccola's opera *Il prigioniero* in Turin, and *Messiah* and Teixeira's *Te Deum* with Harry Christophers in Hong Kong. His many broadcasts for radio include Mozart's C Minor Mass, Rossini's *Petite Messe solennelle*, Panufnik's *Winter Solstice* and Stravinsky's *Canticum Sacrum*.

Roles have included Publio (*La clemenza di Tito*) and Plutone (*L'anima del filosofo*) for the

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Melisso (*Alcina*) for the Opéra de Montpellier; Immigration Officer (Jonathan Dove's *Flight*) for de Vlaamse Opera; Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*) for Glyndebourne Touring Opera; and Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) and Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) for Garsington Opera. Other appearances have included Haydn Masses on tour in Switzerland with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir, *Messiah* in the USA with Robert King, *St Matthew Passion* with Trevor Pinnock in Vienna, Salzburg, Paris and Japan, Bach Cantatas with Gardiner, and *The Creation* with Pinnock at the Lausanne Festival



Linda Richardson was born in Cheshire and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music where she was a Peter Moores Scholar, and then at the National Opera Studio.

An English National Opera Company Principal, her roles there have included Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*), Micaëla (*Carmen*), Gretel (*Hansel*

and Gretel), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Mimì (*La Bohème*), Violetta (*La traviata*), Woglinde (*The Rhinegold*), Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and title roles in *The Fairy Queen* and *Alcina*. She has sung Karolka (*Jenůfa*), Mimì, Nanetta (*Falstaff*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Violetta with Opera North; Lisetta (*La vera costanza*) at Garsington, Norina (*Don Pasquale*) for Clonter Opera, and *The Fairy Queen* in Barcelona.

Concert appearances include premieres of various unknown works by Haydn with the English Haydn Festival, Brahms's *Requiem* with the Northern Sinfonia, *Messiah* with the English Chamber Orchestra in Spain, Britten's *Les Illuminations* with the Netherlands Radio Chamber Orchestra and *Carmina Burana* at the Royal Festival Hall. Linda Richardson appeared as Annie in Jonathan Dove's TV opera *When She Died* on Channel 4, and her recordings include *Hearts and Flowers*, a collection of Victorian Parlour Songs.

Roland Wood was born in Berkshire and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music with Patrick McGuigan and Robert Alderson, then at the National Opera Studio with support from the Peter Moores



Foundation and English National Opera. He began his operatic career as a bass-baritone and his early roles included Silva (*Ernani*) and Colline (*La Bohème*); Luka (*The Bear*) and Martino (*L'Occasione fa il ladro*) for the Walton Trust in Ischia; and Zaretsky (*Eugene Onegin*) for European Union Opera. Having made the transition to baritone, more recent roles include Josev Prasov in the world premiere of *The Bridge* and The Count (*The Marriage of Figaro*) at the RNCM and Opera Holland Park.

He has also covered a number of roles for Glyndebourne Festival Opera and English National Opera and made his debut at English National Opera as the Baron (*La traviata*). Roland Wood is a Company Principal at Scottish Opera, where roles have included Dr Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Marullo (*Rigoletto*) and Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*).

Ashley Catling studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with William McAlpine and at the National Opera Studio, supported



by a scholarship from the Friends of Covent Garden and a Nelly Groner Bursary. Operatic roles to date include Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Fenton (*Falstaff*) and Male Chorus (*The Rape of Lucretia*).

He has appeared in concert at the Barbican, Royal Glasgow Concert Halls, Queen Elizabeth Hall, St John's Smith Square and St Martin in the Fields, and performances include *St Matthew Passion*, a recital of Britten songs for voice and harp at Aldeburgh, and European and USA tours performing and recording Steve Reich's new video opera *Three Tales*.

Performances include *Die Fledermaus* in Dublin Grand Opera House, Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) with Opera Holland Park, Gawain in the premiere of Lynne Plowman's opera *Gawain and the Green Knight* with Music Theatre Wales, and Tamino (*The Little Magic Flute*) with Opera North. Recordings include *Contrabandista*, and *L'Esule di Granata* for Opera Rara.

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

The **London Philharmonic Orchestra** has a long-established reputation for its versatility and artistic excellence. These traits are evident from its performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, its trail-blazing international tours and its pioneering education work. Kurt Masur has been the Orchestra's Principal Conductor since September 2000. Previous

holders of this position, since its foundation in 1932 by Sir Thomas Beecham, have included Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Franz Welser-Möst. Since 1992 the London Philharmonic Orchestra has been Resident Symphony Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall. It has also been Resident Symphony Orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera since 1964.



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

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

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

National Opera and Opera North and appears regularly with the Philharmonia and London Philharmonic Orchestras. In 1996 he made his debut at the Glyndebourne Festival conducting *Così fan tutte*, following it in 1998 with the world premiere of Jonathan Dove's *Flight*.

He is a frequent visitor to Spain where he has given concerts with most of the major Spanish orchestras. He conducted the Spanish premiere of *Peter Grimes* in Madrid and in 1996 the first Spanish production of *The Rake's Progress*. He has appeared in Germany, Switzerland, and The Netherlands, at the Pesaro Festival in Italy, the Hong Kong International Festival, in Japan with a tour of *Carmen*, and in Mexico with the UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Recent new productions he has conducted include *Fidelio* at the New Zealand Festival, *Lucia di Lammermoor* at New Israeli Opera and *Don Giovanni* at Staatsoper Hannover.

His work in the recording studio includes the BBC Television production of Marschner's *Der Vampyr* and twenty-eight complete opera recordings under the sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation. Among these are numerous discs for the Opera Rara label which have won several awards, including the

Belgian Prix Cecilia for Donizetti's *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*. For Chandos he has conducted a series of recitals of operatic arias – with Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Della Jones and Andrew Shore – as well as *The Marriage of Figaro*, *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 Moores Foundation.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

British philanthropist Sir Peter Moores established the Peter Moores Foundation in 1964 to realise his charitable aims and, to fulfill one of these, the Compton Verney House Trust in 1993 to create a new art gallery in the country. Through his charities he has disbursed more than £93 million to a wide variety of arts, environmental and social causes 'to get things done and open doors for people'.

Sir Peter's philanthropic work began with his passion for opera: in his twenties he 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.

Today, the Peter Moores Foundation supports talented young singers with annual scholarships awarded through the Royal Northern College of Music, has made it possible for Chandos Records to issue the world's largest catalogue of operas recorded in English translation, and enabled Opera Rara to record rare *bel canto* repertoire which would otherwise remain inaccessible to the general public.

In live performance, the Foundation has encouraged the creation of new work and schemes to attract new audiences, financed the publication of scores, especially for world premieres of modern operas, and enabled rarely heard works to be staged by British opera companies and festivals.

Projects supported by the Foundation to help the young have ranged from a scheme to encourage young Afro-Caribbeans 'stay at school' for further education, to the endowment

of a Faculty Directorship and Chair of Management Studies at Oxford University (providing the lead donation which paved the way for the development of the Said Business School).

In 1993 the Foundation bought Compton Verney, a Grade 1 Georgian mansion in Warwickshire, designed by Robert Adam, with grounds by Capability Brown. Compton Verney House Trust was set up by Sir Peter to transform the derelict mansion into a world-class art gallery that would provide an especially welcoming environment for the 'first-time' gallery visitor. The gallery, which houses six permanent collections, a Learning Centre for all ages, and facilities for major visiting exhibitions, was opened in March 2004 by HRH the Prince of Wales. The Compton Verney website can be found at: www.comptonverney.org.uk

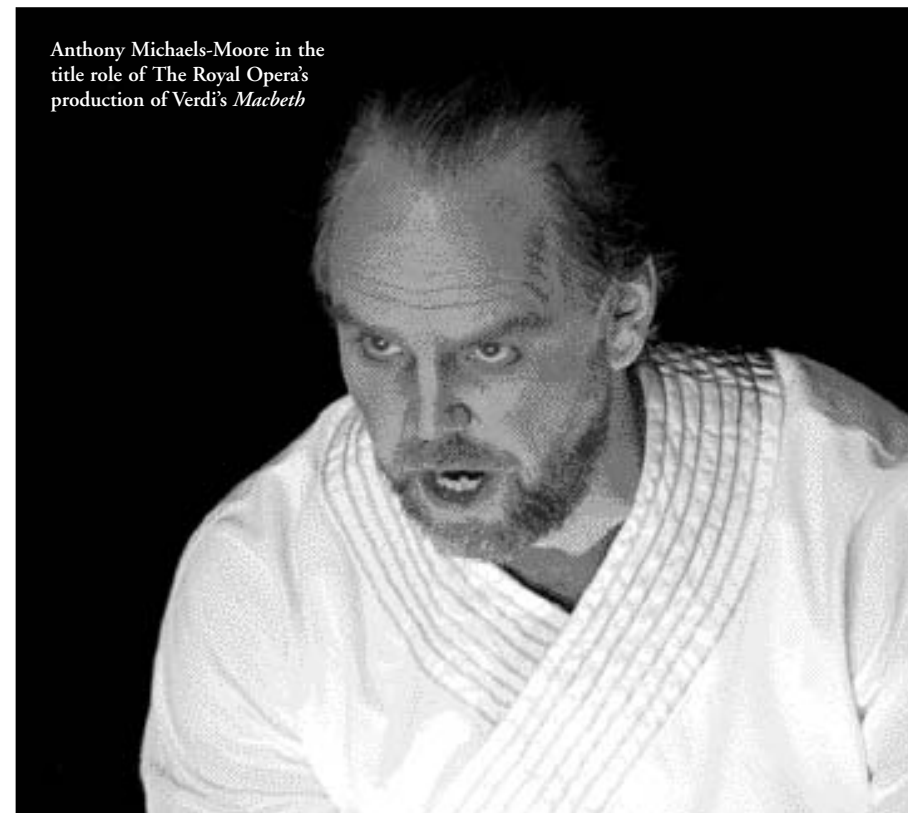
Sir Peter Moores was born in Lancashire and educated at Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford. He was a student at the Vienna Academy of Music, where he produced the Austrian premiere of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, and worked as an assistant producer with Viennese artists in Naples, Geneva and Rome, before returning to England in 1957 to join his father's business, Littlewoods. He was Vice-Chairman of Littlewoods in 1976, Chairman from 1977 to 1980 and remained a director until 1993.

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 of Lancashire by HM the Queen. He was appointed CBE in 1991 and received a Knighthood in 2003 for his charitable services to the arts.



Susan Patterson as
Violetta in Welsh
National Opera's
production of Verdi's
La traviata

Clive Barda



Anthony Michaels-Moore in the
title role of The Royal Opera's
production of Verdi's *Macbeth*

ArenaPAL

Verdi: Ein Maskenball

In der Leihbibliothek meines Bezirks wurde der Klavierauszug von Verdis *Ein Maskenball* (englischer Titel *A Masked Ball*) auf dem Buchrücken jahrelang im Regal "Operette, Musical usw." aufbewahrt. Das ist gar nicht so ausgefallen und streicht sogar die nur selten anerkannte grimmige Ironie des Titels hervor; er ist beinahe ein geschmackloser Witz, wie *Ein Abend im Theater* für ein Drama über die Ermordung von Präsident Abraham Lincoln.

Wer sich den Auszug mit nach Hause nimmt, um ihn auf dem Klavier durchzuspielen oder zu studieren mit den Schallplatten mitzulesen, wird zu Beginn an der Kategorie vielleicht nichts aussetzen haben. Das Vorspiel entfaltet sich lyrisch, aber das winzige, aus drei Noten bestehende Motiv, das es eröffnet, ist geradezu übermütig, sogar frivol – jedenfalls ist das Ambiente nicht tragisch, sondern eher komisch. Keine andere Oper aus Verdis Feder fängt ähnlich an; so ist die nächste in der Reihenfolge, *Die Macht des Schicksals*, etwas ganz Anderes.

Auch nachdem sich der Vorhang geöffnet hat, ist die vorherrschende Stimmung überwiegend jovial. Das Murren der

Verschwörer, die leidenschaftliche Liebeserklärung des Tenors (theoretisch im Geheimen) und die ernste, wohlgemeinte Warnung des Baritons werfen kaum ihre Schatten voraus. Die elegante Melodie und leichte besetzte Begleitung der Königs "Ha, welche hohe Wonne" ("There I shall gaze in ecstasy"), die spritzige Anmut des Pagen "Mit starrem Angesicht" ("She conjures from afar") und das ausgelassene Finale der Höflinge, die sich über die Wahrsagerin lustig machen, legen die Stimmung fest. Vielleicht fragt sich der Besucher der Leihbibliothek, ob die Bezeichnung "musikalische Komödie" wirklich zutrifft, aber von seiner Entdeckung dieser bezaubernden leichten Oper aus der Feder des Meisters ist er gewiss begeistert.

"Jetzt werden andere Saiten aufgezo-gen!" Es scheint, als schlage Verdi nach den bestrickendsten Klängen der ersten Szene mit drei aufwühlenden Akkorden mit der Faust auf den Tisch. Dur verwandelt sich plötzlich und brutal in Moll. Anstelle des Glanzes am Königshof ist die Bühne in den trüben Feuerschein in der Hütte der Wahrsagerin Ulrike getaucht. Die tiefen Töne, mit denen

sie den Herrn der Unterwelt beschwört, sind ganz neu. Sie spricht vom Stöhnen, das aus dem Grab dringt, und die Chromatik, die es begleitet, gleitet wie ein übernatürlicher Schauer über die Haut der Lebenden. Hier versammeln sich die Höflinge, um mit Ulrike ihren Spott zu treiben, aber wir sind vor ihnen angekommen und wissen, dass das, was wir sehen, blutiger Ernst ist. Amelias Ankunft weist schon auf die Bedeutung dieses scheinbaren Exkurses von der eigentlichen Handlung hin und die schicksalhafte Musik betont, wie bedenklich die Situation ist. Nun wird nicht mehr gelächelt; vielmehr stellt sich heraus, dass der Frohsinn der ersten Szene nur eine komische, jetzt schroff gelüftete Maske war. Obwohl König Gustav mit seiner etwas sarkastischen Barkarole "O sag, wenn ich fahr' auf stürmischen Wogen" ("Do you see the furious billows") die frühere gute Laune wieder herzustellen trachtet, ist die Tragödie bereits im Anzug.

Die Oper macht ihrem Namen "Ein Maskenball" Ehre. Hinter der Frivolität der ersten Szene verbergen sich Verrat und gefährliche Leidenschaften. In der zweiten Szene trägt der König die Maske der Anonymität. Das vorübergehend in Ulrikes Weissagung verkündete Schicksal scheint harmlos, als der

Todgeweihte dem Mörder, den er für seinen treuen Freund hält, die Hand reicht.

Zu Beginn des zweiten Akts sucht Amelia bei Mitternacht an der Richtstätte das Kraut, von dem sie sich Läuterung erhofft. Dem Hörer begreift sogleich, dass die Musik Böses ahnen lässt. Vielleicht empfindet er sie als die Beschreibung der wilden, öden Landschaft oder Amelias erregter Gefühle; jedenfalls ist sie schicksalhaft und lässt eine angespannte Stimmung entstehen, die sich nicht nur auf die unmittelbare Gegenwart, sondern auch auf die kommenden Ereignisse auswirkt. Nun trägt auch das Schicksal eine neue Maske. Schreckerfüllt hört Amelia Mitternacht schlagen, sie erblickt schauerliche Visionen, dann tröstet sie sich mit der Hoffnung auf die Gnade des Himmels. Nun betritt auch der König die Richtstätte, die beiden gestehen sich ihre Liebe, und im Schatten des Galgens ertönt Verdis leidenschaftlichstes Liebesduett. Doch das Glück währt nicht lange, denn ihr Gatte Ankarström eilt herbei, um den König zu warnen. Schließlich sieht sie sich genötigt, ihren Schleier zurückzuschlagen. Die Maske ist gefallen – doch was sie enthüllt, gibt die Wahrheit noch immer nicht zu erkennen.

In der ersten Szene des dritten Aktes, die trotz der Abwesenheit des Protagonisten der

eigentliche Mittelpunkt der Oper ist, setzt sich der betrogene Freund und Gatte mit der vermeintlichen neuen Situation auseinander. Seine große Arie "Oh, nur du hast dies Herz mir entwendet" ("Shame on you") entwickelt sich von den unheilvollen, von Blechbläsern verschärften Takten der Einleitung zu gefühlsbetonten Betrachtungen über seinen Verlust; er gedenkt vergangener seliger Stunden, die von Harfe und Flöte untermalt werden. Der echte Edelsinn der Frau, die sich demaskiert und dadurch in ein gänzlich falsches Licht gerückt hat, kommt in ihrer schlichten, seriösen Arie "Der Tod sei mir willkommen" ("I go, but in compassion") wunderbar zum Ausdruck. In Verdis gesamtem Œuvre gibt es kaum ein zweites Solo, das zutiefst empfundene Eindringlichkeit mit solch beherrschter Würde darstellt. Bei beiden Solopartien beruht die Rezeption des Hörers auf der großartigen Musik; wohl folgen noch dramatischere Ereignisse, doch die Quintessenz des Werks findet sich hier: in den dramatisch statischen Partien der Arien entwickelt sich das Wesen der Oper, indem die Musik und die Singstimme überwältigende Affekte im Rahmen des dramatischen Zusammenhangs hervorrufen.

In der letzten Szene werden endlich richtige Masken angelegt. Zunächst hat auch der

König ein Solo, das nach den Arien der beiden anderen Hauptpersonen, Amelia und Anckarström, das Gleichgewicht wahrt. Jetzt gibt sich der wahre Mann zu erkennen; bislang war er der beliebte Herrscher, der Spaßmacher, der Galan, der Liebhaber. Alles ist aufrichtig empfunden (das bezeugt die Musik), aber es waren nur Aspekte seines Charakters; diese Arie zeigt den ganzen Mann. Die Worte sind beinahe nebensächlich: vielmehr ist es die Musik, die seine Seelenqualen, die der verzweifelte Entschluss verursacht, seinen Freund Anckarström und Amelia nach England zu versetzen ("Hier steht mein Name" – "Ah, I have signed it") und die Sublimation seiner schmerzlichen Regungen zum Ausdruck bringt. Der Mann hat die Maske abgelegt. Indes wird dieser Umstand letztendlich durch eine noch markantere Metamorphose in der Partitur verstärkt: hier befindet sich der musikalische und emotionelle Höhepunkt der Oper.

Die Katastrophe ist sehr klug gehandhabt. Wie ja der Kunstgriff des "Schauspiels im Schauspiel" die Illusion der dramatischen Wirklichkeit steigert (*jenes* war erfunden, *dieses* ist echt), so kann die Bühnenmusik dazu führen, dass man übersieht, dass die ganze Partitur ja für die Bühne geschrieben ist: in

beiden Fällen beginnt man, die Darstellung, ob dramaturgisch oder musikalisch, für wirklich zu halten. Während des Maskenballs spielt die Hofkapelle zum Tanz auf, als der Mord begangen wird. Die entsetzten Gäste stellen das Tanzen ein und allmählich verstummt auch die Kapelle (die letzten, die begreifen, was geschehen ist, sind wahrscheinlich der Kapellmeister und der Geiger, der neben ihm steht). Nun kommt die "echte" Musik wieder ins Spiel; der zu Tode getroffene König verzeiht seinen Mördern. Der affektive Höhepunkt erfolgt aber erst, als das Ensemble die Inspiration des Augenblicks in drei zunehmend höher, breiter werdenden Phrasen einfängt – ein sehr Bühnenwirksamer Effekt, der bei dem Hörer sogar den Eindruck erweckt, es handle sich um ein Thema, das unbemerkt die ganze Oper durchzieht und nun in diesem apokalyptischen Augenblick deutlich hervortritt.

Das hat seinen guten Grund: es stimmt nämlich. Es handelt sich um eine Art melodisches, aus drei Noten bestehendes Kleinstmotiv, dessen zweite Note die höchste ist. Es ertönt im Verlauf der Musik mehrmals, zum Beispiel im Liebesduett des zweiten Aktes, in Amelias Arie und dem Terzett im dritten Akt.* Dieses Motiv findet sich auch in

der leichten, frechen Triole im Vorspiel, die im Lauf der Oper wiederholt erklingt, wenngleich die Stimmung denkbar anders ist. Nun ist die Maske endgültig gelüftet. Das Motiv, eine Art musikalische Metapher, durchzieht auf verschiedene Weise das ganze Werk und dient schließlich in erhabenerer Gestalt zur Verkörperung der Tragödie, auf die sich alles zugespitzt hat.

Keine von Verdis sämtlichen Opern hat so viele irreführende Kommentare erfahren wie *Ein Maskenball*. Sicher bieten die persönlichen und historischen Umstände ihrer Entstehung, die Rezeption bei der Premiere und später, die Schwierigkeiten mit der Zensur, die auf einer Abänderung der Handlung, des Schauplatzes und der Personen bestand, reichen Stoff für Diskussionen. Die Oper entstand 1959, einem kritischen Jahr im Risorgimento. Österreich musste die Lombardei abgeben und es gab Pläne für ein italienisches Nationalparlament. Der Schlachtruf "Viva Verdi!" drückte den Enthusiasmus der italienischen Opernfreunde für den Komponisten aus, aber ihre Begeisterung wurde durch den allgemein bekannten Umstand, dass sein Name auch ein Akronym für "Vittorio Emanuele, Re d'Italia" war, noch mehr angefeuert. Kein Wunder, dass die Zensur im reaktionären

Neapel eine Oper, deren Höhepunkt ein Königsmord war, nicht duldete, oder dass Verdi nach Rom ging, wo es zu einem Kompromiss kam. Der ursprüngliche Stoff handelte von der Ermordung des Königs Gustav III. von Schweden im Jahr 1792, die in zeitlicher und örtlicher Hinsicht gar nicht so weit zurück lag. Für die Uraufführung in Rom wurde die Handlung nach Boston und ins 17. Jahrhundert verlegt und die Protagonisten trugen italienische Namen. In dieser Fassung wurde die Oper mehr als ein Jahrhundert lang überall aufgeführt, doch ab der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts ging sie zunehmend ins schwedischen Milieu über die Bühne.

Das ist alles natürlich sehr interessant; nur leider konzentrieren sich Regisseure, Kritiker und Akademiker darauf, als ob es das A und O der Oper sei. Moderne Kommentare erwecken den Eindruck, für das richtige Verständnis müsse man mit diesem Kapitel der schwedischen Geschichte vertraut sein und auch die Ansicht, Gustav sei homosexuell gewesen, ernsthaft erwägen. Ferner kommen auch bei modernen Exegeten die Ideale des Risorgimento und ganz allgemeine Erörterungen über die Aufklärung und Revolution zum Zug, die präzisieren sollen,

worum es bei dieser Oper eigentlich geht. Gewiss tragen solche Überlegungen dazu bei, dass gerade *Ein Maskenball* von Regie-Konzepten heimgesucht werden, bei denen schlimmstenfalls die Augen die Sinne dermaßen irreführen, dass dem Ohr nur eine unwesentliche Nebenfunktion erteilt ist.

Wie unsinnig das alles ist, wird neuen Hörern, die das Werk in einer ihnen verständlichen Sprache kennen lernen, ebenso klar wie denen, die es in seiner italienischen Gestalt kennen und lieben. Wahrscheinlich erhalten sie einen besseren Einblick in die Verschwörung und den Grund für des Königs Besuch bei der Wahrsagerin sowie Einzelheiten über die Warnungen und die Szene im Ballsaal, in der verschiedene Personen einander erkennen. Indes hält die Musik mit der Handlung Schritt, unabhängig von der Sprache, in der gesungen wird. Und ohne Verdis Musik sind Text und Gestik künstlerisch wertlos und können sich nicht behaupten, obwohl das aus zeitgenössischen Rezensionen keineswegs hervorgeht.

Ein Grund, warum sich die Oper behaupten konnte, liegt in der herrlichen Musik, mit der Verdi seine Sänger bedachte. Zu einer Zeit, da Werke dieser Art von kultivierten, intelligenten Leuten abgelehnt

wurden, konnte *Ein Maskenball* dank der Faszination, die große Stimmen ausüben, noch immer den Abend tragen. Als die Oper 1919 an Covent Garden wieder gegeben wurde, wirkte sie nicht überzeugend, aber immerhin schrieb ein Kritiker: "Wer schert sich um fade Überzeugungen, wenn Martinelli (der Tenor Giovanni Martinelli) uns so großzügig mit solchen klanglichen Kleinodien bewirft?" Man denkt an die großen Interpreten der drei Hauptrollen und vereinzelte Meisterleistungen des Oscar oder der Ulrike: diese tragen alle zur kulturellen Überlieferung der Oper bei. Aber letztendlich sind es die Noten, der Klang, mit denen man sich auseinander setzen muss, um die Substanz von *Ein Maskenball* richtig zu erfassen. Die großen, jahrelang vor der ersten Gesamtaufnahme berühmten Arien sind sehr aufschlussreich. Das Liebesduett im zweiten Akt, von dem derselbe Kritiker schrieb, er habe seit Monaten keinen vergleichbaren spontanen Applaus gehört, und die Ensembles des ersten Aktes betören noch in der Erinnerung. Doch die Krone ist das hohe C, das die Sopranistinnen singen, als der König im Sterben liegt – im kleinen, nur aus drei Noten bestehenden Motiv, das die ganze Oper durchzieht. Als Verdi *Ein Maskenball* schrieb, stand er unter immensem Zeitdruck.

Er schaffte es in zwei-einhalb Monaten, und das erklärt vielleicht auch, wieso die Musik trotz ihres Formenreichtums, mit dem sich keine seiner anderen Partituren messen kann, organisch fester gefügt ist als sie alle.

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Übersetzung: Gery Bramall

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Inhaltsangabe

COMPACT DISC ONE

Akt I Erstes Bild

[1] – [2] Unter den Höflingen und Bittstellern, die König Gustav III. aufwarten, befinden sich nicht nur seine Anhänger, sondern auch einige Missgestimmte, darunter die Grafen Ribbing und Horn, die ein Attentat auf das Leben des Königs im Schild führen. [3] – [4] Oscar, der Page des Königs, zeigt ihm die Liste der Gäste für einen geplanten Maskenball, und zu seiner großen Freude erblickt er Amelias Namen: sie ist die Gattin seines Sekretärs und

besten Freundes, Hauptmann Anckarström. [5] Niemand weiß, daß er sie liebt, und Anckarström hält seine bedrückte Stimmung für die allzu berechtigte Sorge über eine Verschwörung. [6] Der König will seine warnenden Worte nicht anhören, denn er zieht es vor, sich auf den Schutz seines Volkes zu verlassen.

[7] Der Obrichter kommt und verlangt vom König, die Zigeunerin und angebliche Wahrsagerin Ulrike zu verbannen. [8] Oscar verteidigt sie energisch [9] – [10] und dem König kommt der Einfall, sich zu verkleiden und sie selbst aufzusuchen. Am Nachmittag will er sich mit seinen Freunden bei ihrer Hütte treffen.

Zweites Bild

[11] Umringt von Frauen und Kindern beschwört Ulrike die Geister. [12] Der als Fischer verkleidete König tritt ein. [13] Die Wahrsagerin prophezeit dem jungen Matrosen Christian Beförderung; [14] der König schreibt rasch ein Patent aus und steckt es dem Burschen mit einer Geldrolle heimlich in die Tasche. Alles besingt freudig Ulrikes geheimnisvolle Mächte.

Amelias Diener kommt: seine Herrin ersuche um eine Unterredung mit der Wahrsagerin. Ulrike schickt alle Anwesenden

fort, doch Gustav ersteckt sich. [15] Zu seiner Überraschung tritt Amelia ein. Sie ist gekommen, um Ulrike wegen ihrer schuldigen Liebe zum König um Rat zu bitten. [16] Ulrike verordnet ihr ein Kraut, das auf der Richtstätte unter dem Galgen wächst und um Mitternacht gepflückt werden muss.

[17] Amelia beschließt, ihren Rat zu befolgen und Gustav ist entschlossen, auch hinzugehen.

[18] – [19] Die verkleideten Höflinge und Oscar kommen herbei, verspotten Ulrike [20] – [21] und der König fordert sie auf, ihm sein Schicksal weiszusagen. Obwohl sie keine Ahnung hat, wer er ist, prophezeit sie ihm Missgeschick; er drängt sie um genauere Auskunft und schließlich sagt sie, dass er von Freundeshand sterben werde: [22] der erste, der ihm die Hand reicht, wird ihn ermorden. Anckarström, der sich verspätet hat, tritt auf und drückt dem König die Hand, was die Prophezeiung scheinbar ad absurdum führt. Ulrike warnt ihn gegen eine Verschwörung, aber Gustav hört sie nicht an.

Akt II

[23] – [25] Bei Mitternacht kommt Amelia zur Richtstätte, um nach dem Kraut zu suchen. Ihr zwiespältigen Gefühle – Liebe und Pflicht – quälen sie. [26] – [28] Voll Erstaunen

sieht sie den König herannahen; er erklärt ihr seine Liebe. Sie erinnert ihn, dass sie die Gattin seines besten Freundes ist, doch schließlich gesteht sie, dass sie seine Liebe erwidert.

[29] Anckarström, der dem König nachgegangen ist, kommt, doch es ist finster und Amelia verschleiert sich, daher erkennt er sie nicht. Er warnt den König vor den Verschwörern und bewegt ihn dazu, mit ihm den Mantel zu tauschen, um sich zu retten. [30] – [31] Auch Amelia drängt ihn mit unterdrückter Stimme zur Flucht; schließlich willigt er ein, aber unter der Bedingung, das Anckarström die Dame bis ans Stadttor begleitet, ohne sie anzusehen oder nach ihrem Namen zu fragen. Dieser willigt ein und der König eilt davon.

[32] Die Verschwörer ergreifen das Paar, das sie für Gustav und seine neue Liebschaft halten. Wutentbrannt erkennen sie Anckarström; nun wollen sie gewaltsam den Namen der Schönen in Erfahrung bringen. Amelia ist entsetzt über die Gefahr, die ihrem Gatten droht und schlägt den Schleier zurück. Anckarström ist wie aus allen Wolken gefallen. [33] Die Verschwörer verlachen ihn und ziehen sich zurück; er bestellt Ribbing und Horn für den nächsten Tag in sein Haus, dann begleitet er Amelia in die Stadt.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Akt III

Erstes Bild

[1] Anckarström will Amelia töten, um sich für ihren Ehebruch mit dem König zu rächen. Sie gesteht, dass sie ihn liebt, doch ihre Beteuerungen, dass sie ihrem Gatten treu geblieben ist, werden nicht erhört. [2] Sie begreift, dass sie sterben muss und bittet um eine letzte Gnade: ihren Sohn noch einmal zu umarmen. [3] – [4] Anckarström willigt ein; sobald er allein ist, wendet sich sein Hass gegen den König: er ist es, der sein Leben verwirkt hat. [5] Ribbing und Horn treten ein, er teilt ihnen mit, dass er über ihre Verschwörung unterrichtet ist und sich anschließen will. [6] Das Leben seines Sohnes ist das Pfand seiner Treue. [7] Das Los soll entscheiden, wer ihm den Todesstoß gibt. [8] Amelia tritt ein, er weist auf die Vase, in der sich drei Zettel mit ihren Namen befinden, und befiehlt ihr, einen zu wählen. [9] Sie zieht den Namen ihres Gatten heraus und durchblickt ihre Pläne.

[10] – [11] Der Page Oscar überbringt die Einladung für einen Maskenball am selben Abend, die Anckarström für sich und seine

Gattin annimmt – die denkbar beste Gelegenheit für den Mord. Die Verschwörer verabreden ihre Kostüme und das Losungswort: “Tod”.

Zweites Bild

[12] – [13] König Gustav hat den Beschluss gefasst, Ankarström als Gesandten nach England zu versetzen, so dass er und Amelia den Hof verlassen müssen. [14] Oscar überreicht ihm den Brief einer unbekannten Dame, der ihn vor einem Mordanschlag auf dem Ball warnt, aber der König will sich die Gelegenheit, Amelia ein letztes Mal zu sehen, nicht entgehen lassen.

Drittes Bild

[15] – [17] Die Maskerade. Ankarström befragt Oscar über das Kostüm des Königs und schließlich verrät er es. [18] Amelia erkennt ihn auch und beschwört ihn vergebens, den Ball zu verlassen. Sie nehmen mit liebevollen Worten für immer Abschied, [19] doch Ankarström wirft sich dazwischen und führt seinen mörderischen Plan aus. Man reisst ihm die Maske ab, so dass alle sehen, wer die Tat begangen hat. [20] Mit seinen letzten Worten schwört Gustav, dass Amelias Ehre unbefleckt ist, und verzeiht

seinem Freund. Das Volk beweint seinen geliebten, ermordeten König.

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Übersetzung: Gery Bramall

Der aus einem irisch-walisischen Elternhaus stammende Verditenor **Dennis O'Neill** gehört zu den Spitzensängern der Welt. Er wird seit langem mit der Royal Opera Covent Garden assoziiert, wo er in zahlreichen Rollen aufgetreten ist, so etwa als 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*).

An der Metropolitan Opera hat er Alfredo (*La traviata*), Radames (*Aida*), *La Bohème* und *Rigoletto* sowie Turiddu (*Cavalleria rusticana*) und Canio (*Pagliacci*) gesungen. Außerdem ist er an der Chicago Lyric Opera, San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera und Vancouver Opera, in Konzerten mit den Sinfonierorchestern von Philadelphia, Cleveland, Montreal und Ottawa sowie beim Cincinnati Festival aufgetreten. Weitere Stationen waren São Paulo und Santiago de

Chile. Als häufiger Gast der Bayerischen Staatsoper hat er in München an Aufführungen von *Un ballo in maschera*, *Il trovatore*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Tosca*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Simone Boccanegra*, *Aida* und *Otello* mitgewirkt. Auch Auftritte an den Opernhäusern von Wien, Berlin, Bonn, Köln, Hamburg, Nizza, Zürich, Paris, Oslo, Brüssel, Barcelona, Oviedo, in der Arena di Verona und in Turin haben ihn in ganz Europa berühmt gemacht. Er arbeitet eng mit der Welsh National Opera zusammen und verfolgt eine lebhaft und abwechslungsreiche Konzertkarriere.

Dennis O'Neill blickt auf eine hochehrgeheure Fernsehserie für die BBC zurück, der ein Fernsehfilm über Caruso und eine weitere Sendung über berühmte Filmmusik folgten. Neben vielen anderen Schallplatten hat er für die Chandos-Serie “Opera in English” *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *La Bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana* und *Pagliacci* aufgenommen, außerdem zwei CDs mit großen Opernarien und, für andere Labels, *La fanciulla del West* mit Slatkin, Verdis *Requiem* mit Sir Colin Davis und eine Anthologie des italienischen Lieds. Dennis O'Neill wurde im Jahr 2000 mit dem britischen Verdienstorden CBE ausgezeichnet.

Anthony Michaels-Moore studierte an der Universität Newcastle und der Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama bei Eduardo Asquez und heute bei Neilson Taylor. Als erster Brite gewann der 1985 den Luciano-Pavarotti-Wettbewerb. Lange Jahre war er sehr erfolgreich Mitglied der Royal Opera Covent Garden, für die er zahlreiche Partien sang, so etwa Belcore (*L'elisir d'amore*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Ping (*Turandot*), Ned Keene (*Peter Grimes*), Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Lescaut (Massenets *Manon*), Stankar (*Stiffelio*), Scarpia (*Tosca*) und die Titelrolle von Simone Boccanegra in Konzertaufführungen der frühen Fassung. Seitdem ist er in der Titelrolle von *Macbeth*, Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*) und Rolando (*Il battaglia di Legnano*) als Gast nach Covent Garden zurückgekehrt.

Für die English National Opera hat er Zurga (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Jeletzki (*Pique Dame*) und die Titelrolle in *Eugen Onegin* gesungen; an der Opera North hat man ihn als Escamillo (*Carmen*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Germont (*La traviata*), Posa (*Don Carlos*) und in der Titelrolle von *Hamlet* erlebt; und an der

Welsh National Opera hat er Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) und *Eugen Onegin* gesungen. Auslandsstationen waren Chicago Lyric Opera, La Scala, Wiener Staatsoper, Metropolitan Opera New York, San Francisco Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Opéra de Paris und Opéra de Paris-Bastille, La Monnaie, San Carlo Napoli, Gran Teatro del Liceu Barcelona, Oviedo-Festival in Spanien, Bayerische Staatsoper, Deutsche Oper Berlin und Teatro Colón Buenos Aires.

Auf der Konzertbühne ist Anthony Michaels-Moore mit Dirigenten wie Sir Colin Davis, Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir David Willcocks, Andrew Davis, Neeme Järvi, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, André Previn, Michael Gielen, Leonard Slatkin, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, John Eliot Gardiner und Sir Neville Marriner aufgetreten. Seine Diskographie umfasst Szymanowskis *Stabat Mater*, *Carmina Burana*, *La vestale*, *The Fairy Queen* und Mercadantes *Orazi e Curiazi* für Opera Rara.

Susan Patterson ist als führender Lyrico-soprinto-Sopran einer neuen Generation hervorgetreten: als hocheffolgreiche Margarita/Helena in Boitos *Mefistofele*, in Dvořáks *Rusalka*, einer Neuinszenierung von

Ernani an der niederländischen Nationale Reisopera, als Madame de Tourvel (*Dangerous Liaisons*) und *Tosca* an der Washington Opera, Mimì (*La Bohème*) und *Aida* an der Baltimore Opera und *Manon Lescaut* beim Spoleto Festival USA. An der Scala debütierte sie in Cherubinis *Lodoiska* mit Riccardo Muti. Zum 100. Todestag Verdis sang sie das *Requiem* mit der Washington Opera unter der Leitung von Plácido Domingo, und in Monte Carlo trat sie in einem Wohltätigkeitskonzert mit Luciano Pavarotti auf.

Zahlreiche Rollen verbinden sie mit der San Francisco Opera, so etwa Angelica (*Vivaldis Orlando Furioso*), Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*), Konstanze (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), und Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Sie ist an der Nederlandse Opera in *Le Comte Ory* und *Mitridate* aufgetreten, in Aix-en-Provence als Konstanze sowie an der Kölner Oper und der Opéra Comique Paris in *L'occasione fa il ladro*. Mit *La traviata*, einem Schlüsselwerk in der Karriere Susan Pattersons, hat man sie in ganz Amerika, an der Vancouver Opera, Montreal Opera, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera und Canadian Opera erlebt.

Auf der Konzertbühne ist sie mit Händels *Jephtha* und *Messiah*, Mendelssohns *Elijah*,

Poulencs *Gloria*, Rossinis *Stabat Mater*, Beethovens Neunter in Lissabon, *Egmont* mit dem San Francisco Symphony Orchestra und Kurt Masur sowie mit der Los Angeles Philharmonic in Szymanowskis *Stabat Mater* und Mahlers Zweiter aufgetreten.

Für die Chandos-Serie "Opera in English" hat sie Elvira in Verdis *Ernani* und Elektra in *Idomeneo* gesungen. Hervorzuheben sind auch Aufnahmen von *Le Comte Ory* und *Il matrimonio segreto*.

Jill Grove studierte an der Music Academy of the West, am New England Conservatory und an der Stephen F. Austin State University. Zur Zeit lebt sie in New York und setzt ihre Gesangsausbildung bei Patricia McCaffrey fort.

An der Metropolitan Opera New York hat man Jill Grove als Magdalene (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* mit Levine), Madelon (*Andrea Chenier*), Pantis (Boitos *Mefistofele*), Emilia (*Otello*) und Mary (*Der fliegende Holländer* mit Valery Gergiev) erlebt. Außerdem hat sie die Erste Norn (*Götterdämmerung*) in Dallas, Azucena (*Il trovatore*) in Tulsa, Mistress Quickly (*Falstaff*) in Santa Fe und in der Welturaufführung von Tobias Pickers *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* in Los Angeles gesungen.

Auch in Europa ist sie seit ihren Auftritten am Théâtre du Châtelet Paris, an der Nederlandse Opera (Äbtissin in Szymanowskis *Król Roger*), Welsh National Opera (Ulrike in *Un ballo in maschera*) und English National Opera (Marfa in *Chowanschtschina*) ein Begriff.

Jill Grove arbeitet regelmäßig mit den führenden Orchestern und Dirigenten der Welt zusammen. Sie hat Beethovens Neunte mit der Los Angeles Philharmonic sowie den Sinfonieorchestern von Atlanta, Houston und Detroit aufgeführt, Mahlers Dritte beim Schleswig-Holstein Festival und mit der Houston Symphony, Beethovens *Missa solemnis*, Prokofjews *Alexander Newski* mit dem National Symphony Orchestra und Bernsteins Erste beim Ravinia Festival. Als Mitglied des Houston Grand Opera Studios ist sie in zahlreichen Rollen mit dem Ensemble aufgetreten, so etwa als Anne Kronenberg in der Welturaufführung von *Harvey Milk* und als Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* mit Cecilia Bartoli.

Christopher Purves studierte Anglistik am King's College Cambridge, bevor er mit der innovativen Rockgruppe *Harvey and the Wallbangers* von sich reden machte. Als sich die Gruppe 1988 auflöste, nahm er seine

Gesangsausbildung bei David Keren, Diane Forlano und Janice Chapman wieder auf.

Hervorzuheben unter seinen Opernrollen sind Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) an der Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera und Opera North, Marcello (*La Bohème*) an der Scottish Opera, Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*) an der Welsh National Opera und Opera North, Podesta (*La gazza ladra*) an der Garsington Opera sowie Siegfried (*Genoveva*) und Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) an der Opera North. Er schuf die Rolle des Executioner in James Macmillans *Ines de Castro* und ist in Macmillans *Parthenogenesis* bei den Edinburgher Festspielen aufgetreten, wo man ihn auch als Cecil in *Maria Stuarda* unter der Leitung von Sir Charles Mackerras erlebt hat.

Zu seinem Konzertprogramm gehörten Mozarts Messe C-Dur in Aix-en-Provence mit The Sixteen, Monteverdis *Vespro della Beate Vergine* mit Richard Hickox, Bachs Messe h-Moll beim Festival de la Chaise-Dieu, Händels *Judas Maccabeus* in Nürnberg und *Saul* mit dem Gabrieli Consort beim Covent Garden Festival und Festival de la Chaise-Dieu, John Taveners *Apocalypse* bei den Proms mit der City of London Sinfonia, *Les Mamelles de Teresias* mit der London Sinfonietta unter

Sir Simon Rattle, Britten's *War Requiem* und Haydns *Schöpfung* mit dem Ulster Orchestra, und *Belshazzar's Feast* mit der English Northern Sinfonia unter Paul Daniel und mit dem Hallé Orchestra. Christopher Purves gab sein Solodebüt beim Aldeburgh Festival im Juni 2004. Für die Chandos-Serie "Opera in English" hat er die Titelrolle in *The Marriage of Figaro* sowie die Partie des Gottardo (*The Thieving Magpie*) aufgenommen.

Brindley Sherratt wurde in Lancashire geboren und studierte Trompete und Gesang an der Royal Academy of Music.

Er ist regelmäßig auf der Konzertbühne aufgetreten, so etwa mit der *Johannespassion* mit Trevor Pinnock in London und Luzern, Mozarts *Requiem* und Messe c-Moll bei den Festivals von Swansea und York mit Jane Glover und den London Mozart Players, Händels *Judas Maccabeus* und Mozarts *Vespers* zur Eröffnung der Symphony Hall mit dem City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, *Johannespassion* in Bonn und Strawinskys *Les Noces* in Paris mit Pierre Boulez und dem Ensemble Intercontemporain, Strawinskys *Canticum Sacrum* in Paris mit dem BBC Symphony Orchestra, Dallapiccolas *Oper Il prigioniero* in Turin sowie *Messiah* und

Texeiras *Te Deum* mit Harry Christophers in Hongkong, Unter seinen vielen Rundfunkkonzerten sind hervorzuheben Mozarts Messe c-Moll, Rossinis *Petite Messe solennelle*, Panufniks *Winter Solstice* und Strawinskys *Canticum Sacrum*.

Er hat Publio (*La clemenza di Tito*) und Plutone (*L'anima del filosofo*) an der Royal Opera Covent Garden gesungen, Melisso (*Alcina*) an der Opéra de Montpellier, Immigration Officer (Jonathan Doves *Flight*) an der Vlaamse Opera, Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*) mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera sowie Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) und Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) an der Garsington Opera. Weitere Höhepunkte waren Haydn-Messen auf einer Schweiz-Tournee mit Sir John Eliot Gardiner und dem Monteverdi Choir, *Messiah* in den USA mit Robert King, *Matthäuspassion* mit Trevor Pinnock in Wien, Salzburg, Paris und Japan, Bach-Kantaten mit Gardiner und *Die Schöpfung* mit Pinnock bei den Festspielen von Lausanne.

Linda Richardson wurde in Cheshire geboren und studierte am Royal Northern College of Music mit einem Stipendium der Peter Moores Foundation und anschließend am National Opera Studio.

Als Hauptsängerin der English National Opera hat sie Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*), Micaëla (*Carmen*), Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Mimì (*La Bohème*), Violetta (*La traviata*), Woglinde (*Das Rheingold*), Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) und die Titelrollen in *The Fairy Queen* und *Alcina* gesungen. Außerdem hat sie Karolka (*Jenůfa*), Mimì, Nanetta (*Falstaff*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) und Violetta an der Opera North, Lisetta (*La vera costanza*) in Garsington, Norina (*Don Pasquale*) an der Clonter Opera und *The Fairy Queen* in Barcelona gesungen.

Im konzertanten Rahmen hat sie an der Erstaufführung vernachlässigter Werke Haydns beim English Haydn Festival mitgewirkt und ist mit dem *Requiem* von Brahms mit der Northern Sinfonia, *Messiah* mit dem English Chamber Orchestra in Spanien, Britten's *Les Illuminations* mit dem niederländischen Radio-Kammerorkest und *Carmina Burana* in der Royal Festival Hall aufgetreten. Linda Richardson hat Annie in Jonathan Doves Fernsehoper *When She Died* für Channel 4 gesungen, und unter dem Titel *Hearts and Flowers* hat sie eine Sammlung viktorianischer Salonlieder aufgenommen.

Roland Wood wurde in Berkshire geboren und studierte am Royal Northern College of Music bei Patrick McGuigan und Robert Alderson, bevor er seine Gesangsausbildung am National Opera Studio mit Unterstützung durch die Peter Moores Foundation und English National Opera fortsetzte.

Er begann seine Opernkarriere als Bassbariton und sang anfangs Partien wie Silva (*Ernani*) und Colline (*La Bohème*); Luka (*The Bear*) und Martino (*L'Occasione fa il ladro*) für den Walton Trust in Ischia sowie Saretski (*Eugen Onegin*) mit der European Union Opera. Nach seinem Wechsel in die Baritonlage sang er Josev Prasov in der Welturaufführung von *The Bridge* und Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*) am Royal Northern College of Music und an der Opera Holland Park.

Außerdem war er Ersatzsänger in diversen Rollen an der Glyndebourne Festival Opera und der English National Opera. Er debütierte an der English National Opera als Baron (*La traviata*). Als Hauptsänger an der Scottish Opera hat er Dr. Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Marullo (*Rigoletto*) und Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*) gesungen.

Ashley Catling studierte an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama bei William

McAlpine und am National Opera Studio mit einem Stipendium der Friends of Covent Garden und einem Nelly Groner Bursary. Sein Opernrepertoire umfasst Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Fenton (*Falstaff*) und Male Chorus (*The Rape of Lucretia*).

Konzertstationen waren die Barbican Concert Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, St. John's Smith Square und St. Martin-in-the-Fields (alle London) und die Royal Glasgow Concert Halls; er hat in der *Matthäuspassion* und in einem Recital mit Britten-Liedern für Stimme und Harfe in Aldeburgh gesungen und auf Tourneen durch Europa und die USA die neue Video-Oper *Three Tales* von Steve Reich dargeboten und aufgenommen.

Ashley Catling ist in *Die Fledermaus* im Grand Opera House Dublin, als Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) mit der Opera Holland Park, Gawain in der Erstaufführung von Lynne Plowmans Oper *Gawain and the Green Knight* mit dem Music Theatre Wales und als Tamino (*Die kleine Zauberflöte*) mit der Opera North aufgetreten. Zu seinen Schallplattenaufnahmen gehören Contrabandista und *L'Esule di Granata* für Opera Rara.

Geoffrey Mitchells Gesangskarriere hat ihm ein bemerkenswert breitgefächertes Repertoire von der alten bis zur neuen Musik beschert und ihn nach Skandinavien, Deutschland, in die ehemalige Tschechoslowakei, nach Kanada und Australasien geführt. Nachdem er bei der BBC erste Dirigiererfahrungen gesammelt hatte, begann er mit eigenen Sängern zu arbeiten und gründete den **Geoffrey Mitchell Choir**. Aus ersten Aufnahmen entwickelte sich eine langfristige Zusammenarbeit des Chors mit Opera Rara, für die er über dreißig Tonträger aufgenommen hat. Der Chor genießt wachsendes Ansehen und ist bei der BBC und internationalen Plattenfirmen gefragt. Für Chandos hat der Geoffrey Mitchell Choir an zahlreichen Aufnahmen der hervorragend kritisierten Reihe Opera in English unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation teilgenommen.

Das **London Philharmonic Orchestra** ist seit langem als vielseitiges und künstlerisch herausragendes Orchester fest etabliert. Bezeugt wird dies durch Konzert- und Opernaufführungen, vielfach preisgekrönte Schallplattenaufnahmen, bahnbrechende internationale Gastspielreisen und wegbereitende pädagogische Arbeit.

Chefdirigent des Orchesters ist seit September 2000 Kurt Masur. Er steht in einer langen Tradition, die seit der Gründung des Orchesters durch Sir Thomas Beecham im Jahre 1932 durch Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt und Franz Welser-Möst aufgebaut wurde. Seit 1992 ist das London Philharmonic Orchestra das Gastsinfonieorchester der Royal Festival Hall und bereits seit 1964 das Gastsinfonieorchester an der Glyndebourne Festival Opera.

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

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

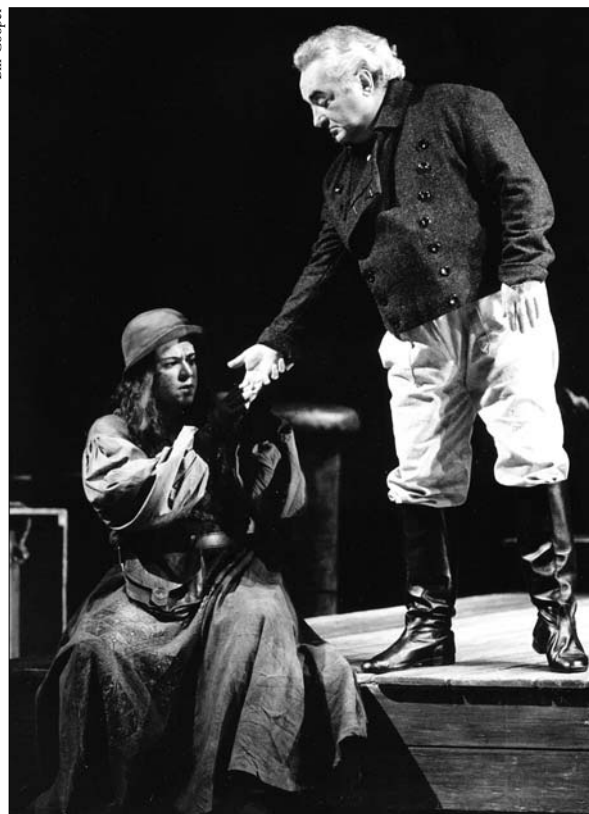
London Philharmonic Orchestra auf. 1996 gab er sein Debüt beim Glyndebourne Festival mit *Così fan tutte* und hat dort 1998 die Uraufführung von Jonathan Doves *Flight* geleitet.

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

Seine Tätigkeit im Aufnahmestudio umfaßt die Produktion von Marschners *Der Vampyr*

fürs BBC-Fernsehen und achtundzwanzig vollständige Opernaufzeichnungen unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation. Darunter befinden sich zahlreiche Aufnahmen der Reihe Opera Rara, die mehrere Preise gewonnen haben, beispielsweise den belgischen Prix Cecilia für Donizettis *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*. Für Chandos hat er die Aufzeichnung einer Serie von Programmen mit Opernarien geleitet (mit Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Della Jones und Andrew Shore), außerdem *The Marriage of Figaro*, *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.

Bill Cooper

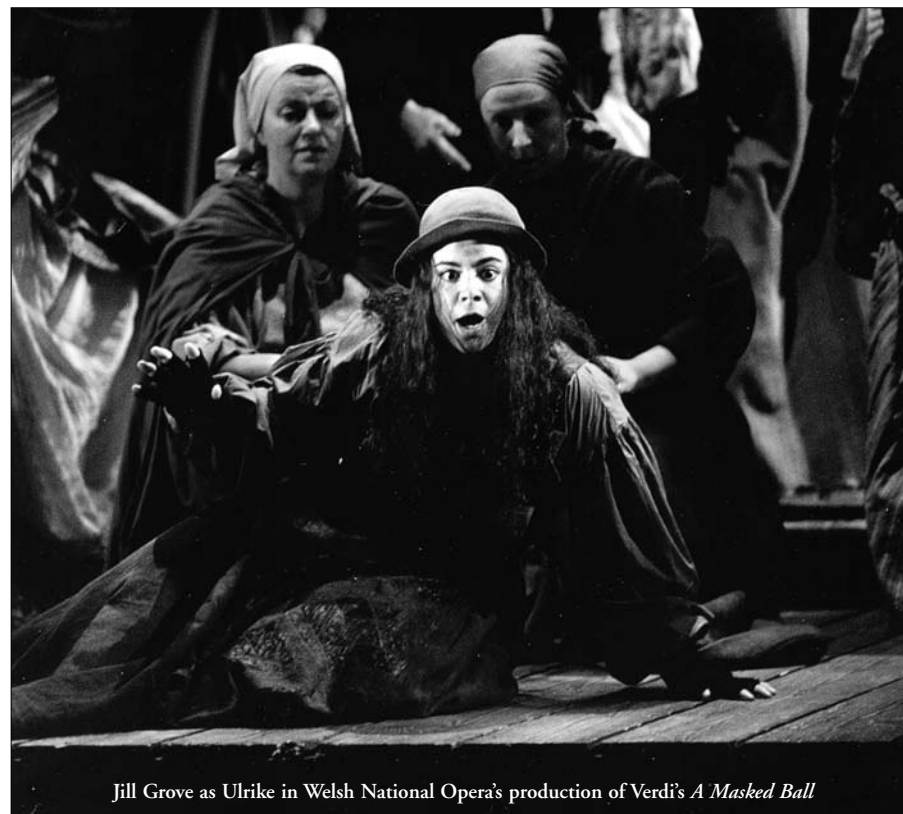


Jill Grove as Ulrika and Dennis O'Neill as Gustavus III in Welsh National Opera's production of Verdi's *A Masked Ball*



Clive Barda

Dennis O'Neill as Riccardo
(Gustavus III) in The Royal
Opera's production of Verdi's
A Masked Ball



Bill Cooper

Jill Grove as Ulrike in Welsh National Opera's production of Verdi's *A Masked Ball*

Verdi: Un Bal masqué

Pendant des années, la partition piano-chant d'*Un Bal masqué* (avec son titre anglais sur la tranche, *A Masked Ball*) est restée sur les rayons de notre bibliothèque locale dans la catégorie "Opéra léger, Comédie musicale, etc.". Une simple erreur, pourrait-on penser, mais en fait elle attire l'attention sur un point qui passe généralement inaperçu: l'ironie amère du titre, une sorte de plaisanterie de mauvais goût, comme le titre *A Night at the Theatre* ("Une nuit au théâtre"), pour une pièce sur la mort d'Abraham Lincoln.

Celui qui emprunte la partition et l'emporte chez lui pour la jouer au piano ou la suivre en écoutant des disques, pourrait fort bien penser au début que l'ouvrage a été classé dans la bonne catégorie. Le Prélude se déroule de façon lyrique mais commence par une sorte de triquet, une petite figure capricieuse enjouée, voire même espiègle, certainement plus proche du comique que du tragique. Aucun autre opéra de Verdi ne commence de cette manière, diamétralement opposée à *La Force du destin* (par exemple), qui vient juste après *Un Bal masqué* dans l'ordre de composition de ses ouvrages lyriques.

Au lever du rideau, c'est également la douceur de l'opéra léger qui prédomine. Quelques murmures de conspiration, une expression amoureuse passionnée du ténor (théoriquement en privé) et une touche de prudence grave et compréhensive du baryton ne parviennent pas encore à jeter la moindre ombre profonde. L'atmosphère est créée par l'élégante mélodie et l'accompagnement léger de l'air du roi "Je la reverrai dans l'extase" ("There I shall gaze in ecstasy"), par la finesse pétillante de celui du Page "Lorsqu'elle tourne" ("She conjures from afar") et par le finale délirant des courtisans qui veulent à tout prix s'amuser aux dépens de la diseuse de bonne aventure. L'auditeur sourit, tape du pied et voudrait se joindre à eux. L'emprunteur de la bibliothèque, qui doute que l'expression "comédie musicale" soit tout à fait appropriée, est néanmoins enchanté d'avoir découvert un opéra léger et fascinant de Verdi.

"Maintenant effacez ce sourire de votre visage!" C'est alors comme si Verdi, après avoir commencé son opéra de la manière la plus captivante, frappait brusquement sur la table avec trois accords tendus. La tonalité majeure

passé tout à coup et féroce au mode mineur. Sur scène, l'obscurité à peine dissipée par la lueur du feu dans la cabane de la diseuse de bonne aventure remplace les splendeurs de la cour. La sorcière Ulrike invoque le Roi des ténèbres dans des sonorités profondes complètement différentes de ce que l'on a entendu jusqu'à présent. Ce qu'elle chante ressemble à des gémissements provenant de l'au-delà et le chromatisme de la musique se coule comme un frisson surnaturel sur la peau des vivants. C'est l'endroit et c'est la personne choisie par les courtisans pour leur joyeuse escapade; mais nous sommes là avant eux et ce que nous avons vu n'est pas une plaisanterie. L'arrivée d'Amelia laisse entendre combien cette diversion est intimement liée à l'intrigue principale et la musique conduite par le destin affirme sa gravité. Les sourires ont disparu; l'atmosphère heureuse de la première scène n'était qu'un masque comique, maintenant arraché. Et bien que le roi Gustave cherche à recréer une ambiance cordiale avec sa barcarolle légèrement moqueuse "Dis-moi si les flots" ("Do you see the furious billows"), le décor de la tragédie est planté.

C'est un opéra de masques. La frivolité qui caractérise la première scène cache la réalité

des intrigues traîtresses et des passions dangereuses. Dans la deuxième scène, le roi porte le masque de l'anonymat. Le destin que la prophétie d'Ulrike révèle momentanément sous son véritable visage, prend l'aspect de la Sécurité lorsque le condamné serre la main de son assassin, en qui il a confiance.

Au début de l'Acte II, Amelia cherche à trouver près du gibet la plante magique qui doit lui apporter la guérison de l'âme. Une chose est certaine pour l'auditeur: la musique est de mauvais augure. Elle dépeint peut-être la scène sauvage et lugubre, ou l'agitation des émotions d'Amelia, mais on sent la gravité qui crée une atmosphère de tension profonde non seulement dans l'instant présent, mais aussi pour l'action qui va se dérouler ensuite. Et même le Destin change de masque. Après la terreur provoquée par les douze coups de minuit et ses visions d'horreur, Amelia trouve la consolation dans l'espoir de la clémence divine, puis, avec l'arrivée du roi, dans la chaleur de l'amour humain. Le duo d'amour le plus passionné de toute l'œuvre de Verdi se déroule à l'ombre du gibet, mais ce bref moment de bonheur s'achève en désastre. À l'approche de son mari, Amelia rabat son voile; puis, lorsque les conspirateurs les rejoignent, on apporte des lumières et le voile

glisse, véritable catastrophe. Une fois encore le masque tombe – mais ce qui apparaît maintenant masque encore la vérité.

Dans la scène de la bibliothèque à l'Acte III, qui se situe vraiment au cœur de l'opéra malgré l'absence de son héros, l'ami et mari trompé fait face à la nouvelle réalité de sa vie. Son air ("Shame on you", "Et c'est toi qui déchires mon âme") passe du fatalisme des premières mesures, dont le côté dramatique est renforcé par les cuivres, aux sentiments plus tendres de la perte qu'il vient de vivre, la douceur du passé étant représentée par la harpe et la flûte. La véritable noblesse de cette femme, que la chute de son masque a révélée à tort sous un jour tellement ignoble, prend corps dans la grave simplicité de son air suivant ("I go, but in compassion", "Je mourrai, mais avant, de grâce"). Une fois encore, dans toute l'œuvre de Verdi il n'y a probablement aucun solo qui exprime de façon plus émouvante un besoin pressant et sincère avec une telle dignité dans la retenue. Dans ces deux solos, c'est la qualité de la musique qui détermine notre réaction, et bien que la dernière partie de l'ouvrage comporte des développements plus dramatiques, les véritables profondeurs de l'opéra se trouvent ici: c'est dans les passages statiques de l'air sur le plan dramatique que

s'opère le travail éminemment lyrique, l'évocation de sentiments puissants dans un contexte dramatique véhiculés par la musique et la voix qui la chante.

Les masques sont vraiment mis pour la scène finale. Avant cette scène, le roi chante son propre solo, ce qui recrée un équilibre dans le trio des principaux rôles par rapport aux grands airs d'Amelia et d'Ankerstroem. C'est ici qu'il apparaît sous son véritable visage – on a découvert le souverain populaire, le blagueur, le galant, l'amoureux, mais quelle que soit l'exactitude de ces visages (la musique le prouve), ce ne sont que des aspects, alors qu'ici c'est l'homme lui-même qui se dévoile. Il ne s'agit pas – ou seulement dans un sens superficiel – de ce que disent les mots: c'est la musique qui rend réelle l'angoisse provoquée par sa décision d'éloigner son ami Ankerström et Amelia, ("Ah, I have signed it", "Ah, j'ai signé mon propre sacrifice!") et la sublimation de ses désirs encore douloureux. C'est un homme sans masque. Mais il reste à asséner à ce qui doit être le sommet musical et émotionnel de l'opéra un coup encore plus puissant, une métamorphose dans la partition.

La catastrophe est gérée avec efficacité. De même que le procédé du théâtre dans le théâtre augmente avec efficacité l'illusion de la

réalité dramatique (*cela* était de la fiction, *ceci* est un fait), de même l'interpolation de la musique de scène peut nous faire oublier que la partition elle-même est de la musique pour la scène: dans les deux cas, la principale représentation, dramatique et/ou musicale, se rapproche de l'acceptation des faits comme une réalité. Au bal masqué, l'orchestre de la cour joue de la musique de danse au moment de l'assassinat. Les invités horrifiés arrêtent de danser et l'orchestre cesse peu à peu de jouer (le chef d'orchestre et le violoniste qui se trouve juste à côté de lui sont probablement les derniers à se rendre compte de ce qui est arrivé). La "véritable" partition reprend et le roi blessé à mort donne son absolution. Mais le sommet émotionnel survient lorsque toutes les voix s'élèvent ensemble, trouvant l'inspiration du moment dans trois phrases en forme d'arche, chacune plus élevée et plus ample que la précédente. Cela fait toujours beaucoup d'effet lors des représentations, et on a même l'impression instinctive qu'il s'agit d'un thème qui, sans que l'on en soit vraiment conscient, a imprégné l'opéra avant d'être exposé maintenant au moment apocalyptique.

Si tel est le cas, c'est pour une excellente raison, car c'est la vérité. Ces "arches" sont

essentiellement des phrases mélodiques de trois notes, celle du milieu étant la plus aiguë. Il s'agit d'une figure qui s'est présentée à certains moments stratégiques d'un bout à l'autre de la partition, dans le duo d'amour de l'Acte II, par exemple, dans l'air d'Amelia qui précède et dans le trio de la scène précédente.¹ Et même si l'atmosphère et la manière sont aussi éloignées que possible, la figure de trois notes est également celle du triolet léger et capricieux qui se trouve au commencement de l'opéra et que l'on entend de temps en temps du début à la fin. C'est la chute finale du masque. Comme une image musicale, la figure de trois notes imprègne l'opéra; elle apparaît sous de multiples visages et finalement, élargie et anoblée, elle est utilisée pour incarner la tragédie vers laquelle tout a tendu.

De tous les opéras de Verdi, *Un Bal masqué* fut celui qui suscita le plus grand nombre de commentaires erronés. Bien sûr, on peut dire beaucoup de choses de ses circonstances (personnelles et historiques) de composition, de l'accueil réservé à sa création et aux représentations suivantes, des problèmes avec la censure et des changements dont ils furent la cause pour le cadre de l'action et le nom des personnages. L'opéra fut écrit en 1859, année décisive dans la lutte pour l'unité italienne. Les

Autrichiens avaient été chassés de Lombardie et un parlement national avait vu le jour. Les Italiens amateurs d'opéra pouvaient crier "Viva Verdi!" en toute conviction, mais la ferveur de leur acclamation était encore plus forte et pleine de jubilation car chacun savait que le nom du compositeur pouvait également être compris comme l'acronyme de "Vittorio Emanuele, Rè d'Italia". Il n'est pas surprenant que les censeurs de l'État réactionnaire de Naples aient rejeté un opéra qui culminait dans l'assassinat d'un dirigeant; ou que Verdi ait dû proposer son ouvrage à Rome où l'on parvint à un compromis. À l'origine, l'intrigue était centrée sur l'assassinat de Gustave III de Suède en 1792. C'était une histoire relativement récente et elle se déroulait en un lieu qui n'était pas si éloigné. Pour la création romaine, l'action fut déplacée dans le temps et dans l'espace pour se situer à Boston au XVII^e siècle. Cette version, avec des noms italiens donnés aux personnages principaux, resta la version généralement représentée pendant plus d'un siècle; le cadre suédois fut rétabli progressivement à partir du milieu du XX^e siècle.

Tout ceci est intéressant, mais il est dommage que les metteurs en scène, les critiques et les érudits aient concentré leur attention sur de tels aspects comme s'ils étaient

essentiels pour apprécier l'ouvrage. En lisant certains commentaires actuels, on pourrait supposer qu'il est indispensable de comprendre ce chapitre de l'histoire de la Suède et, par la même occasion, d'insister sur l'homosexualité de Gustave III. La critique moderne s'est également emparée des idéaux du Risorgimento et de l'intérêt général pour l'instruction et la subversion afin de "conceptualiser" cet opéra. Et c'est au moins en partie à cause de telles idées qu'*Un Bal masqué* a fait l'objet de nombreuses productions scéniques "conceptuelles" qui, ce qui est plus grave, ont tellement déformé l'esprit au travers de l'aspect visuel que seule subsiste une petite marge d'appréciation auditive.

La perversité de cette démarche s'imposera aux auditeurs qui découvriront à présent cet opéra dans une langue qu'ils connaissent, peut-être, mieux que la version italienne; il en sera de même que pour ceux qui le connaissent et l'apprécient au travers de représentations dans la version italienne originale. Pour un public anglophone, un texte en anglais a l'avantage de permettre une meilleure compréhension de la conspiration, de la raison pour laquelle le roi veut aller voir la sorcière, et de tout ce qui concerne les mises

en garde et l'identification des personnages au cours du bal. Mais dans une large mesure, la musique et l'action racontent ensemble leur histoire, que ce soit en anglais ou en italien. Et sans la musique de Verdi (bien que ce ne soit pas évident dans la plupart des critiques actuelles), les mots et l'action perdent leur valeur ou leur pouvoir de survie sur le plan artistique.

La splendeur de l'écriture de Verdi pour le chant est l'un des facteurs de la survie de cet opéra. À une époque où les gens cultivés et intelligents considéraient de tels opéras comme démodés, le spectacle reposait encore sur le frisson du grand chant. Dans l'ensemble, *Un Bal masqué* n'a convaincu personne lors de sa reprise à Covent Garden en 1919, mais, comme un critique l'a rapporté: "Qui se soucie de convictions sans intérêt lorsque Martinelli [Giovanni Martinelli, le ténor de cette représentation] vous lance des trésors de sonorité avec tant de prodigalité?". On pense à tous les grands chanteurs qui ont incarné les trois principaux rôles, avec parfois des interprétations remarquables d'Oscar et Ulrike: ils font partie de l'héritage accumulé de l'opéra. Mais, avant tout, pour savoir ce qu'est *Un Bal masqué*, il faut se remémorer la musique, le *son* de l'ouvrage. Les grands airs,

qui ont connu la célébrité discographique bien avant l'existence du premier enregistrement intégral, en disent long. Le duo d'amour de l'Acte II ("Cela fait bien des mois que je n'ai pas entendu un éclat aussi spontané d'applaudissements" écrit le même critique à propos de la représentation de 1919) et les ensembles de l'Acte I reviennent aussi de façon exaltante à la mémoire. Et pour couronner le tout, cette sublime phrase en arches avec la voix de la soprano qui monte jusqu'au contre-ut dans la scène de la mort du roi, qui à son tour lie tant de choses au moyen de cette figure de trois notes éparpillée dans tout l'opéra. Verdi n'avait pas beaucoup de temps lorsqu'il composa *Un Bal masqué*. Il le fit en deux mois et demi, ce qui explique peut-être pourquoi, bien qu'aucune de ses partitions n'offre autant de possibilités, aucune ne parvient à une unité aussi serrée, aussi organique.

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Traduction: Marie-Stella Pâris

¹Ce point a été développé de manière plus complète dans l'essai de l'auteur consacré à *Un Bal masqué* qui figure dans le programme du Festival de Salzbourg, 1990.

Synopsis

COMPACT DISC ONE

Acte I

Scène 1

[1] – [2] Un groupe de courtisans et de solliciteurs attend le roi; parmi eux figurent à la fois ses partisans et un certain nombre de mécontents, entraînés par le comte Ribbing et le comte Horn, qui sont en train de comploter l'assassinat du souverain. [3] – [4] Lorsque Oscar, le page du roi, lui montre la liste des invités au bal masqué qu'il a projeté, il se réjouit de voir le nom d'Amelia, la femme de son ami et secrétaire Anckarstroem. [5] Personne n'est au courant de son amour secret et Anckarstroem interprète son humeur changeante comme la crainte justifiée d'une conspiration. [6] Gustave III refuse d'écouter les avertissements d'Anckarstroem, préférant se fier à l'amour de son peuple pour le protéger.

[7] Un juge arrive et demande au roi de prendre des mesures contre Ulrike, une bohémienne qui, dit-on, peut prédire l'avenir. [8] Oscar défend cette femme avec fougue, [9] – [10] ce qui incite le roi à proposer d'aller lui rendre visite sous un déguisement. Ils

conviennent de se rencontrer un peu plus tard le jour même, près de sa cabane.

Scène 2

[11] Ulrike, entourée de femmes et de jeunes garçons, exécute un rituel satanique. [12] Le roi arrive déguisé. [13] Lorsque Ulrike prédit une promotion à un jeune marin, Cristian, [14] le roi écrit rapidement une note sur une liasse de billets et la glisse avec précaution dans la poche du marin. Ainsi la prophétie d'Ulrike se réalise et ceux qui sont présents acclament ses pouvoirs.

Le serviteur d'Amelia entre et demande un entretien pour sa maîtresse. Ulrike renvoie la foule, mais Gustave III se cache. [15] Il est stupéfait de voir arriver Amelia. Elle est venue demander conseil à Ulrike au sujet de l'amour coupable qu'elle porte au roi. [16] Ulrike lui dit de cueillir une herbe à minuit sous le gibet. [17] Lorsqu'elle accepte de s'y rendre, Gustave III décide de l'y suivre.

[18] – [19] Les courtisans et Oscar arrivent déguisés et se moquent d'Ulrike. Déguisé en pêcheur, [20] – [21] le roi demande à Ulrike de lui dire la bonne aventure. Elle ne le reconnaît pas et lui dit qu'il est malchanceux, puis, lorsqu'il la presse de questions, elle prédit sa mort. [22] Son meurtrier sera la première

personne qui lui serrera la main. Anckarstroem arrive en retard et salue le roi; il semble ainsi contredire la prophétie, d'autant plus qu'Ulrike reconnaît alors enfin son invité. Elle continue à le mettre en garde contre une conspiration, mais Gustave III l'ignore.

Acte II

[23] Il est minuit sous le gibet. [24] – [25] Tourmentée par son conflit entre amour et devoir, Amelia est venue chercher l'herbe magique. [26] – [28] Elle est étonnée de voir apparaître le roi qui lui déclare son amour. Tout en insistant sur le fait qu'elle est la femme de son ami le plus proche, elle finit par admettre qu'elle l'aime aussi.

[29] Anckarstroem les surprend ensemble, mais, dans l'obscurité, il ne reconnaît pas sa femme. Il a suivi le roi, conscient des risques que celui-ci prend constamment. Les conspirateurs approchent. Anckarstroem convainc Gustave III de s'échapper, pendant qu'il écarte les conspirateurs. [30] – [31] Après des supplications étouffées d'Amelia, Gustave III accepte, à condition que son ami ne cherche pas à savoir le nom de la femme qui l'accompagne, ni ne regarde son visage, mais l'escorte en ville. Anckarstroem promet d'honorer cette requête et le roi s'en va.

[32] Les conspirateurs s'emparent de ceux qu'ils prennent pour Gustave III et son nouvel amour. Découvrant Anckarstroem, ils tentent de le contraindre à révéler l'identité de la dame. Amelia, terrifiée par la menace qui pèse contre son mari, laisse tomber son voile. Anckarstroem est horrifié. [33] Lorsque les conspirateurs partent, en riant à ses dépens, il demande à Ribbing et à Horn de venir chez lui le lendemain matin. Anckarstroem raccompagne sa femme en ville.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Acte III

Scène 1

[1] Anckarstroem s'apprête à tuer Amelia pour venger son aventure adultère avec le roi. Elle admet son amour pour Gustave III, mais insiste sur le fait qu'elle n'a pas trahi son mari. [2] Ses protestations restent vaines et elle comprend qu'elle ne pourra échapper à la mort; elle supplie son mari de lui laisser dire un dernier adieu à son fils. [3] – [4] Anckarstroem accepte. Resté seul, il retourne sa colère contre Gustave III et décide que c'est le roi qui doit mourir. [5] Lorsqu'arrivent Ribbing et Horn, Anckarstroem leur annonce qu'il est au courant de leur conspiration contre

le roi, mais il leur demande de se joindre à eux, [6] offrant la vie de son fils en gage de sa bonne foi. [7] Ils décident alors de tirer au sort qui portera le coup mortel. [8] Amelia entre; Anckarstroem lui explique que des morceaux de papier portant des noms se trouvent dans un vase et il lui ordonne d'en choisir un. [9] Elle tire le nom de son mari et comprend ce qui est en train de se tramer.

[10] – [11] Oscar survient avec une invitation à un bal masqué ce même soir. Anckarstroem accepte en son nom et en celui de sa femme. Le bal lui fournira l'opportunité parfaite pour commettre son meurtre. Les conspirateurs choisissent ensemble leur costume et un mot de passe: "meurtre".

Scène 2

[12] – [13] Gustave III a décidé d'éloigner Anckarstroem et Amelia de sa cour. [14] Oscar remet au roi une lettre anonyme le mettant en garde contre un risque d'assassinat au cours du bal, mais le roi est déterminé à profiter de cette fête pour avoir une chance de revoir une dernière fois Amelia.

Scène 3

[15] – [17] Au bal masqué. Comme toutes les personnes présentes sont masquées,

Anckarstroem doit s'adresser à Oscar pour connaître le déguisement du roi; Oscar le lui révèle. [18] Amelia identifie également Gustave III, mais malgré ses supplications, elle ne parvient pas à le convaincre de quitter la réception. Ils se déclarent leur amour, [19] mais Anckarstroem se jette entre eux et commet le meurtre prémédité. Les masques sont arrachés et l'identité de l'assassin est révélé: Anckarstroem. [20] Les derniers mots que prononce Gustave III en mourant protestent de l'innocence d'Amelia et accordent son pardon à son ami. Tous expriment leur amour pour le roi assassiné.

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Traduction: Marie-Stella Pâris

Né au Pays de Galles de parents irlandais et gallois, **Dennis O'Neill** est l'un des principaux ténors sur la scène mondiale et un spécialiste des œuvres de Verdi. Il a longtemps collaboré avec le Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, où il fut entre autres 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*).

Pour le Metropolitan Opera, il a été Alfredo (*La traviata*), Radames (*Aida*), a chanté dans *La Bohème*, *Rigoletto*, et tenu les rôles de Turridu (*Cavalleria Rusticana*) et Canio (*Pagliacci*). En Amérique du Nord, il s'est également produit avec le Chicago Lyric Opera, le San Francisco Opera, le San Diego Opera, le Vancouver Opera et il a chanté en concert avec les orchestres symphoniques de Philadelphie, Cleveland, Montréal et Ottawa ainsi que dans le cadre du Festival de Cincinnati. Il a chanté à São Paulo et Santiago. Il est fréquemment invité par l'Opéra de Munich où il s'est produit dans *Un ballo in maschera*, *Il trovatore*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Tosca*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Aida* et *Otello*. Il a chanté dans de nombreux théâtres lyriques européens, entre autres à Vienne, Berlin, Bonn, Cologne, Hambourg, Nice, Zurich, Paris, Oslo, Bruxelles, Barcelone, Oviedo, aux Arènes de Vérone et à Turin. Il travaille de près avec le Welsh National Opera et donne fréquemment des concerts très variés.

Les séries télévisées de Dennis O'Neill pour la BBC furent extrêmement populaires et il a achevé depuis, toujours pour la télévision, un film sur Caruso et un autre basé sur des célèbres musiques de films. Parmi ses

nombreux enregistrements, on notera, dans la série de Chandos "Opera in English", *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *La Bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci* ainsi que deux disques de grands airs d'opéra; pour d'autres maisons de disques, il a enregistré *La fanciulla del West* avec Slatkin, le *Requiem* de Verdi sous la baguette de Sir Colin Davis et une anthologie de chansons italiennes.

Dennis O'Neill a reçu le titre honorifique de Companion of the British Empire au Nouvel An 2000.

Anthony Michaels-Moore fit ses études à Newcastle University et à la Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama avec Eduardo Asquez. Il étudie aujourd'hui avec Neilson Taylor. Il fut le premier britannique à remporter le Concours Luciano Pavarotti en 1985. Il a joué d'une longue et riche association avec le Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, devenant membre de la compagnie et se produisant dans de nombreux rôles dont ceux de Belcore (*L'elisir d'amore*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Ping (*Turandot*), Ned Keene (*Peter Grimes*), Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Lescaut (*Manon de Massenet*), Stankar (*Stiffelio*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), chantant

également en concert le rôle-titre de la première version de *Simon Boccanegra*. Il a retrouvé la scène de Covent Garden en invité pour le rôle-titre de *Macbeth* et ceux du Comte (*Le nozze di Figaro*) et de Rolando (*Il battaglia di Legnano*).

Pour l'English National Opera, il a chanté en anglais Zurga (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), le Comte (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Eletski (*La Dame de pique*) ainsi que le rôle-titre d'*Eugène Onéguine*; pour Opera North, il a été Escamillo (*Carmen*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Germont (*La traviata*), Posa (*Don Carlos*) et tenu le rôle-titre de *Hamlet*. Avec le Welsh National Opera, il a été Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) et *Eugène Onéguine*. En dehors du Royaume-Uni, il a chanté avec le Chicago Lyric Opera, à La Scala de Milan, avec l'Opéra de Vienne, avec le Metropolitan Opera à New York, le San Francisco Opera, le Pittsburgh Opera, l'Opéra de Paris et l'Opéra de Paris-Bastille, au Théâtre de la Monnaie, au San Carlo Napoli, au Teatro Del Liceu à Barcelone, au Festival d'Oviedo en Espagne, avec l'Opéra de Munich, avec le Deutsche Oper à Berlin et au Teatro Colón à Buenos Aires.

Dans la salle de concert, Anthony Michaels-Moore a chanté sous des chefs aussi éminents

que Sir Colin Davies, Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir David Willcocks, Andrew Davis, Neeme Järvi, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, André Previn, Michael Gielen, Leonard Slatkin, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, John Eliot Gardiner et Sir Neville Marriner. Il a enregistré entre autres le *Stabat Mater* de Szymanowski, *Carmina Burana*, *La vestale*, *The Fairy Queen* ainsi que le rôle de Mercadante dans *Orazi e Curiazi* pour Opera Rara.

Susan Patterson s'inscrit parmi les grandes sopranos lirico-spinto de sa génération grâce à ses portraits très réussis de Margarita et Helena dans *Mefistofele* de Boito et *Rusalka* de Dvořák; une nouvelle mise en scène d'*Ernani* avec Reisopera aux Pays-Bas; Mme de Tourvel (*Dangerous Liaisons*) et *Tosca* avec le Washington Opera; Mimì (*La Bohème*) et *Aida* avec le Baltimore Opera; et *Manon Lescaut* dans le cadre du Festival de Spoleto aux Etats-Unis. Elle a fait ses débuts à La Scala sous Riccardo Muti dans *Lodoiska* de Cherubini. Elle a chanté le *Requiem* de Verdi avec le Washington Opera sous Plácido Domingo pour le centenaire de la mort du compositeur et a participé à un concert de bienfaisance à Monte Carlo avec Luciano Pavarotti.

Elle a souvent chanté avec le San Francisco Opera, ses rôles comprenant ceux d'Angelica (*Orlando Furioso* de Vivaldi), Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*), Constanze (*L'Enlèvement au sérail*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) et Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Sur la scène européenne, elle s'est produite avec l'Opéra Néerlandais dans *Le Comte Ory* et *Mitridate*, elle a chanté le rôle de Constanze à Aix-en-Provence et *L'occasione fa il ladro* avec l'Opéra de Cologne et l'Opéra-Comique à Paris. L'opéra *La traviata* a dominé la carrière de Susan Patterson, elle l'a interprété dans tous les Etats-Unis ainsi qu'avec le Vancouver Opera, l'Opéra de Montréal, l'English National Opera, le Welsh National Opera et la Canadian Opera Company.

Dans la salle de concert, Susan Patterson a chanté entre autres *Jephtha* et le *Messie* de Haendel, *Elijah* de Mendelssohn, le *Gloria* de Poulenc, le *Stabat Mater* de Rossini, la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven à Lisbonne, ainsi qu'*Egmont* avec le San Francisco Symphony Orchestra sous la baguette de Kurt Masur. Elle a également interprété le *Stabat Mater* de Szymanowski et la Symphonie "Résurrection" de Mahler avec le Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

Pour la série de Chandos "Opera in English", elle a enregistré le rôle d'Elvira dans

Ernani de Verdi et d'*Electra* dans *Idomeneo*. Parmi ses autres enregistrements, notons *Le Comte Ory* et *Il matrimonio segreto*.

Jill Grove a fait ses études à la Music Academy of the West, au New England Conservatory et à Stephen F. Austin State University. Elle vit aujourd'hui à New York et étudie avec Patricia McCaffrey.

Au Metropolitan Opera à New York, Jill Grove a tenu entre autres les rôles de Magdalene (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) sous la baguette de Levine, Madelon (*Andrea Chenier*), Pantis (*Mefistofele* de Boito), Emilia (*Otello*) et Mary (*Der fliegende Holländer*) sous la baguette de Valeri Gergiev. Sur d'autres scènes lyriques américaines, elle a été la Première Norne (*Götterdämmerung*) avec le Dallas Opera, Azucena (*Il trovatore*) avec le Tulsa Opera, Mistress Quickly (*Falstaff*) avec le Santa Fe Opera. Elle a participé à la création mondiale de *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* de Tobias Picker avec le Los Angeles Opera. Sur la scène européenne, elle a chanté au Théâtre du Châtelet à Paris, avec l'Opéra Néerlandais (l'Abbesse dans *Le Roi Roger* de Szymanowski), avec le Welsh National Opera (Ulrike dans *Un ballo in maschera*) et avec l'English National Opera (Marfa dans *La Khovanchtchina*).

Jill Grove travaille régulièrement avec les plus grands orchestres et chefs d'orchestre du monde. Elle a interprété la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven avec le Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, l'Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, le Houston Symphony Orchestra et le Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Elle a chanté la Troisième Symphonie de Mahler dans le cadre du Festival du Schleswig-Holstein et avec le Houston Symphony Orchestra, la *Missa Solemnis* de Beethoven, *Alexandre Nevski* de Prokofiev avec le National Symphony Orchestra, et la Symphonie "Jeremiah" de Bernstein au Festival de Ravinia. En tant que membre du Houston Grand Opera Studio, elle a chanté plusieurs rôles dont celui d'Anne Kronenberg dans la création mondiale de *Harvey Milk* et celui de Thisbe dans *La Cenerentola* avec Cecilia Bartoli.

Christopher Purves a étudié la littérature anglaise au Kings College de Cambridge avant de se produire et d'enregistrer avec le groupe vocal de rock and roll très innovateur, *Harvey and the Wallbangers*. À la suite de la dissolution du groupe en 1988, il reprit ses études vocales avec David Keren, Diane Forlano et Janice Chapman.

Il a chanté des rôles tels que Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) au Welsh National Opera, au

Scottish Opera et à l'Opera North, Marcello (*La Bohème*) au Scottish Opera, Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*) au Welsh National Opera et à l'Opera North, Podesta (*La gazza ladra*) au Garsington Opera, Siegfried (*Genoveva*) et Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) à l'Opera North. Il a créé le rôle du Bourreau dans *Ines de Castro* de James Macmillan. Il s'est produit dans *Parthenogenesis* de Macmillan au Festival d'Édimbourg, où il a également chanté le rôle de Cecil dans *Maria Stuarda* sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras.

En concert, Christopher Purves s'est produit dans la Messe en ut mineur de Mozart à Aix-en-Provence avec l'ensemble Sixteen, les *Vêpres de 1610* de Monteverdi sous la direction de Richard Hickox, la Messe en si mineur de Bach au Festival de La Chaise-Dieu, *Judas Maccabeus* de Haendel à Nuremberg, *Saul* avec le Gabrieli Consort à Covent Garden et à La Chaise-Dieu, l'*Apocalypse* de John Tavener aux BBC Proms de Londres avec le City of London Sinfonia, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* avec le London Sinfonietta sous la direction de Sir Simon Rattle, le *War Requiem* de Britten et *Die Schöpfung* de Haydn avec l'Orchestre d'Ulster, et *Belshazzar's Feast* avec l'English Northern Sinfonia sous la direction de Paul

Daniel et avec le Hallé Orchestra. Christopher Purves a fait ses débuts en récital au Festival d'Aldeburgh en juin 2004. Ses enregistrements incluent le rôle-titre dans *The Marriage of Figaro* et le rôle de Gottardo (*La gazza ladra*) pour la série Opera in English de Chandos.

Né dans le Lancashire, **Brindley Sherratt** a étudié la trompette et le chant à la Royal Academy of Music.

Il se produit régulièrement en concert et a chanté entre autres *La Passion selon saint Jean* avec Trevor Pinnock à Londres et Lucerne, le *Requiem* et la Messe en ut mineur de Mozart aux Festivals de Swansea et York avec Jane Glover et les London Mozart Players, *Judas Maccabeus* et les *Vêpres* de Mozart pour l'inauguration du Symphony Hall avec le City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, *La Passion selon saint Jean* à Bonn et *Les Noces* de Stravinsky à Paris avec Pierre Boulez et l'Ensemble Intercontemporain, *Canticum Sacrum* de Stravinsky à Paris avec le BBC Symphony Orchestra, l'opéra *Il prigioniero* de Dallapiccola à Turin, le *Messie* et le *Tu Deum* de Teixeira avec Harry Christophers à Hong-Kong. Il a participé à plusieurs concerts pour la radio, chantant entre autres la Messe en ut mineur de Mozart, la *Petite Messe solennelle* de

Rossini, *Winter Solstice* de Panufnik et *Canticum Sacrum* de Stravinsky.

Sur la scène lyrique, il a été entre autres Publio (*La clemenza di Tito*) et Pluton (*L'anima del filosofo*) pour le Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Melisso (*Alcina*) pour l'Opéra de Montpellier; le Fonctionnaire de l'immigration (*Flight* de Jonathan Dove) pour de Vlaamse Opera; le Superintendant Budd (*Albert Herring*) pour Glyndebourne Touring Opera; et Babilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) et le Commandeur (*Don Giovanni*) pour Garsington Opera. Il a également chanté des Messes de Haydn en tournée en Suisse avec Sir John Eliot Gardiner et le Monteverdi Choir, le Messie aux États-Unis avec Robert King, *La Passion selon saint Matthieu* avec Trevor Pinnock à Vienne, Salzbourg, Paris et au Japon, des cantates de Bach avec Gardiner et *The Creation* avec Pinnock dans le cadre du Festival de Lausanne.

Native du Cheshire, **Linda Richardson** a fait ses études au Royal Northern College of Music où elle a bénéficié d'une bourse de la Peter Moores Foundation, puis au National Opera Studio.

L'une des vedettes de la compagnie de l'English National Opera, elle a tenu entre

autres sur cette scène les rôles de Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*), Micaëla (*Carmen*), Gretel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Mimì (*La Bohème*), Violetta (*La traviata*), Woglinde (*Das Rheingold*), Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) ainsi que les rôles-titres dans *The Fairy Queen* et *Alcina*. Elle a été Karolka (*Jenůfa*), Mimì, Nanetta (*Falstaff*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) et Violetta pour Opera North; Lisetta (*La vera costanza*) à Garsington, Norina (*Don Pasquale*) pour Clonter Opera et *The Fairy Queen* à Barcelone.

Dans la salle de concert, elle a participé à la première de diverses œuvres inconnues de Haydn dans le cadre de l'English Haydn Festival, elle a chanté le *Requiem* de Brahms avec le Northern Sinfonia, le *Messie* avec l'English Chamber Orchestra en Espagne, *Les Illuminations* de Britten avec l'Orchestre de Chambre de la Radio Néerlandaise et *Carmina Burana* au Royal Festival Hall. Linda Richardson tient le rôle d'Annie dans *When She Died*, un opéra de Jonathan Dove pour la chaîne de télévision Channel 4, et elle a enregistré entre autres *Hearts and Flowers*, un recueil de chansons de salon victoriennes.

Natif du Berkshire en Angleterre, **Roland Wood** fit ses études au Royal Northern College of Music avec Patrick McGuigan et Robert Alderson, puis au National Opera Studio avec le soutien de la Peter Moores Foundation et de l'English National Opera.

Il débuta sa carrière à l'opéra comme baryton-basse, chantant entre autres Silva (*Ermani*) et Colline (*La Bohème*); Luka (*The Bear*) et Martino (*L'occasione fa il ladro*) pour le Walton Trust à Ischia; et Zaretski (*Eugène Onéguine*) pour l'Opéra de l'Union Européenne. Il décida par la suite de passer baryton et a récemment été Josev Prasov dans la création mondiale de *The Bridge* et le Comte (*Le nozze di Figaro*) au Royal Northern College of Music et pour Opera Holland Park.

Il a également tenu plusieurs rôles pour le Glyndebourne Festival Opera et l'English National Opera, faisant ses débuts à l'English National Opera dans le Baron (*La traviata*). Roland Wood est l'une des têtes d'affiche de Scottish Opera où ses rôles ont inclus Dr Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Marullo (*Rigoletto*) et Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*).

Ashley Catling a fait ses études à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama avec William

McAlpine et au National Opera Studio, grâce à une bourse des Amis de Covent Garden et une bourse Nelly Groner. Parmi ses rôles à l'opéra, notons ceux de Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Fenton (*Falstaff*) et Male Chorus (*The Rape of Lucretia*).

Il a chanté en concert au Barbican Concert Hall, au Royal Glasgow Concert Halls, au Queen Elizabeth Hall, à St John's Smith Square et à St Martin in the Fields; il a interprété entre autres *La Passion selon saint Matthieu*, un récital de mélodies pour voix et harpe de Britten à Aldeburgh; il a fait des tournées en Europe et aux Etats-Unis, interprétant et enregistrant le nouvel opéra vidéo de Steve Reich, *Three Tales*.

Il a chanté dans *Die Fledermaus* au Grand Opéra de Dublin, a tenu les rôles de Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) avec Opera Holland Park, Gawain lors de la première de l'opéra de Lynne Plowman, *Gawain and the Green Knight* avec Music Theatre Wales et Tamino (*The Little Magic Flute*) avec Opera North. Parmi ses enregistrements, notons *Contrabandista* et *L'Esule di Granata* pour Opera Rara.

Durant sa carrière de chanteur, Geoffrey Mitchell aborda un répertoire

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

Le **London Philharmonic Orchestra** est depuis longtemps réputé pour la multiplicité de ses talents et son excellence en matière artistique. Ces qualités se manifestent dans la salle de concert comme sur la scène lyrique, dans ses nombreux enregistrements primés, ses tournées internationales innovatrices et son travail d'avant-garde dans le domaine éducatif. Kurt Masur est chef principal de l'Orchestre depuis

septembre 2000. Parmi ses prédécesseurs, depuis la fondation de l'Orchestre en 1932 par Sir Thomas Beecham, notons Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt et Franz Welser-Möst. Depuis 1992, le London Philharmonic Orchestra est orchestre symphonique en résidence au Royal Festival Hall. Il est également orchestre symphonique en résidence au Glyndebourne Festival Opera depuis trente-huit ans.

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

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

Glyndebourne en 1996, une scène qu'il retrouva en 1998 pour diriger la création mondiale de *Flight* de Jonathan Dove.

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

En studio, il a participé entre autres à la production de la BBC Television de *Der Vampyr* de Marschner, dirigeant aussi vingt-huit intégrales d'opéras financées par la Peter Moores Foundation. Plusieurs de ces intégrales furent enregistrées pour Opera Rara et primées, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* de Donizetti recevant en Belgique le Prix Cecilia. Pour Chandos, David Parry a dirigé une série d'enregistrements d'airs d'opéra (avec Bruce

Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Della Jones et Andrew Shore) de même que *The Marriage of Figaro*, *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.



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Caricature of Verdi and the censor of *A Masked Ball*, 1858–59



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Illustration from the cover of a vocal score of *A Masked Ball*, showing the first cast (Gaetano Fraschini as Riccardo (Gustavus III), Leone Giraltoni as Renato (Anckarstroem), and Eugenie Julienn-Dejean as Amelia), with Focosi's designs

Verdi: Un ballo in maschera

La partitura vocale di *A Masked Ball* (versione inglese) è rimasta catalogata per anni sotto la categoria “Opera leggera, Commedia musicale etc.” nella nostra biblioteca locale. Un errore comprensibile, si direbbe, e infatti richiama l’attenzione sulla tesi raramente accettata che il titolo riveli una sinistra ironia, come uno scherzo di cattivo gusto, un po’ come un lavoro intitolato *Una serata a teatro* e incentrato sull’assassinio di Abramo Lincoln.

A prima vista, un lettore che avesse preso in prestito la partitura per suonarla al pianoforte o seguire la musica su disco potrebbe anche ritenere adeguata la catalogazione. Il Preludio ha uno sviluppo lirico, ma si apre con una piccola figura allegra simile a una terzina, giocosa, persino maliziosa, che comunque suggerisce il comico piuttosto che il tragico. Nessun’altra opera di Verdi inizia in questo modo, e l’ouverture è diametralmente opposta (per esempio) a quella del melodramma successivo, *La forza del destino*.

Anche quando si è alzato il sipario, predomina la geniale modalità dell’opera leggera. Qualche mormorio di congiura, un’appassionata espressione d’amore da parte

del tenore (teoricamente in privato) e una grave nota di avvertimento solidale da parte del baritono non riescono a evocare ombre cupe. Lo stato d’animo è stabilito dall’elegante melodia e dal leggero accompagnamento del Re, “La rivedrà nell’estasi” (“There I shall gaze in ecstasy”), dal cinguettio elegante di “Volta la terrea fronte” (“She conjures from afar”) di Oscar e dal finale travolgente di cortigiani impegnati a pregustare una giocosa spedizione presso la Sibilla. L’ascoltatore sorride, batte il piede a tempo e ha voglia di partecipare. Chi ha preso in prestito la partitura, per quanto possa dubitare della precisione del termine “commedia musicale”, è comunque incantato di avere scoperto un’avvincente opera leggera di Verdi.

“E ora basta sorridere!” È come se Verdi, avendo iniziato l’opera nel suo stile più affascinante, adesso calasse un pugno sul tavolo con tre accordi pieni di tensione. All’improvviso, la tonalità maggiore passa selvaggiamente a quella minore. Sulla scena la tetra capanna della zingara illuminata dal fuoco prende il posto degli splendori di corte. La maga Ulrica invoca il re delle tenebre in

toni cupi, completamente diversi da tutto quanto si era sentito finora. Il suo canto evoca i gemiti dell’oltretomba e il cromatismo della musica striscia come un brivido soprannaturale sulla pelle dei vivi. Questo è il luogo e questa è la persona scelta dai cortigiani per la loro scommessa; ma noi arriviamo prima di loro e ciò che abbiamo visto non è uno scherzo. L’arrivo di Amelia suggerisce quanto questo diversivo sia intimamente legato alla trama principale e la musica fatale ne proclama la gravità. I sorrisi sono scomparsi; il lieto linguaggio della prima scena si rivela una maschera comica adesso caduta. E per quanto Gustavo, il re, cerchi di ristabilire l’allegria con la sua barcarola leggermente comica (“Di’ tu se fedele” – “Do you see the furious billows”) l’atmosfera è pronta per la tragedia.

Questa è un’opera di maschere. La prima scena indossa la propria frivolezza per nascondere le realtà delle congiure traditrici e delle passioni pericolose. Nella seconda il re si nasconde sotto la maschera dell’anonimato. La fortuna, momentaneamente rivelata nella sua vera forma dalla profezia di Ulrica, prende la maschera della Sicurezza quando il condannato stringe la mano al suo fidato amico che sarà il suo assassino.

Ora, all’inizio dell’Atto II, Amelia cerca di

trovare le erbe per la sua pozione purificatrice in un luogo di morte. Una cosa è certa nella mente dell’ascoltatore: la musica qui è presagio di sventura. Sarà anche una descrizione della scena selvaggia e lugubre o della turbolenza dei sentimenti di Amelia, ma la sentiamo sinistra, crea uno stato d’animo di estrema tensione non solo nell’immediato presente, ma in vista dell’azione che sta per svolgersi. E anche la fortuna trova un’altra maschera. Dopo i terrori della campana di mezzanotte e le sue visioni d’orrore, Amelia trova consolazione nella speranza della misericordia divina e poi, con l’arrivo del re, nel calore dell’amore umano. Il più appassionato duetto d’amore dell’intera produzione verdiana viene pronunciato all’ombra del patibolo, ma il breve intervallo di felicità termina con una catastrofe. Mentre suo marito si avvicina, Amelia abbassa il velo; poi, quando i cospiratori li raggiungono, sotto le luci il velo tragicamente scivola. Ancora una volta cade una maschera, ma la rivelazione continua a mascherare la verità.

Nella scena della Biblioteca nell’Atto III, fondamentale per l’opera nonostante l’assenza del suo protagonista, l’amico e marito oltraggiato affronta quella che considera la nuova realtà della sua vita. La sua aria (“Eri tu” – “Shame on you”) passa dalla fatale

agitazione delle drammatiche battute di apertura, indurite dall'infuso degli ottoni, ai sentimenti più teneri di perdita personale, mentre la dolcezza dei tempi passati viene rappresentata dall'arpa e dal flauto. La vera nobiltà di questa donna che, senza maschera, è apparsa in una luce così falsamente ignobile, prende corpo nella grave semplicità dell'aria seguente ("Morrò, ma prima in grazia" – "I go, but in compassion"). Ancora una volta in tutta la produzione verdiana probabilmente non esiste un assolo che esprima in maniera più commovente una sentita insistenza unita a un ritegno altrettanto dignitoso. In entrambe le arie è la qualità della musica a determinare la nostra reazione e nonostante l'epilogo più drammatico debba ancora venire, la seria profondità dell'opera viene scandagliata qui: nei passaggi drammaticamente statici dell'aria prende corpo il lavoro unicamente lirico, l'evocazione di potenti sentimenti in un contesto drammatico attraverso la musica e il canto.

Per la scena finale entrano in campo davvero le maschere. Prima, però, il re ha il proprio assolo, che crea equilibrio nel trio dei protagonisti, aggiungendosi alle grandi arie di Amelia e Anckarstroem. È qui che si rivela la sua vera personalità. Finora abbiamo visto il

sovrano amato dal popolo, il burlone, il galante, l'innamorato ma, per quanto queste siano tutte vere qualità (come prova la musica), si tratta sempre di sfaccettature: qui entra in campo l'uomo vero. Ma non si tratta solo di parole (o solo in senso superficiale): è la musica che rende reale l'agonia della sua decisione di mandare via l'amico Anckarstroem e Amelia, ("Ah, l'ho segnato" – "Ah, I have signed it") e la sublimazione dei suoi desideri ancora dolorosi. Questo è l'uomo senza maschera. Ma quella gli sarà imposta alla fine da una metamorfosi ancora più potente nella partitura in quello che sarà il momento culminante dell'opera, dal punto di vista musicale ed emotivo.

La catastrofe viene magistralmente orchestrata. Proprio come l'espedito di una commedia nella commedia intensifica efficacemente l'illusione di una realtà drammatica (*quella* era finzione, *questa* è realtà), così l'interpolazione della musica di scena può farci dimenticare che la partitura stessa è musica per il teatro: in entrambi i casi, la principale rappresentazione, drammatica e/o musicale, fa un passo per farsi accettare come realtà. Al ballo mascherato il complesso di corte esegue musica da ballo nel momento dell'assassinio. Gli ospiti inorriditi smettono di

ballare e gradualmente il complesso smette di suonare (il direttore e il violinista accanto a lui sono probabilmente gli ultimi a rendersi conto dell'accaduto). La "vera" partitura prende il sopravvento e il Re mortalmente ferito pronuncia il suo messaggio di assoluzione. Ma il culmine emotivo arriva mentre le voci si innalzano insieme cogliendo l'ispirazione del momento in tre frasi ad arco, ciascuna più alta e ampia della precedente. È sempre un momento di grandissimo effetto nella rappresentazione e addirittura provoca la sensazione istintiva dell'esistenza di un tema che, quasi impercettibilmente, ha permeato l'opera e adesso si manifesta nel suo momento apocalittico.

Se così è, c'è un'ottima ragione: si dà il caso che sia vero. Questi "archi" sono essenzialmente frasi melodiche di tre note, di cui la più alta è quella centrale. È una figura che ritorna in determinati momenti chiave durante la partitura, per esempio nel duetto d'amore dell'Atto II, l'aria di Amelia che lo precede e il trio della scena precedente¹. E per quanto lontanissima per stato d'animo e maniera, la figura di tre note è anche quella della terzina leggera, giocosa che apre l'intera opera e ritorna di tanto in tanto in tutta l'opera. Questo è l'estrema caduta della

maschera. Come un'immagine musicale, la figura di tre note permea l'opera, comparando in varie vesti e infine, ampliata e nobilitata, è utilizzata per rappresentare la tragedia verso la quale tutto si dirigeva.

Tra tutte le opere di Verdi, *Un ballo in maschera* è stata oggetto delle teorie più fuorvianti. Naturalmente molto si può dire sulle circostanze (personali e storiche) della sua composizione, sull'accoglienza riservata alla prima e agli spettacoli successivi, sui problemi con la censura e le conseguenti modifiche alla vicenda e ai nomi dei personaggi. L'opera fu scritta nel 1859, anno determinante per il Risorgimento italiano. Gli Austriaci erano stati cacciati dalla Lombardia e si preparava un parlamento nazionale. Gli Italiani melomani potevano gridare sinceramente "Viva Verdi!", ma il fervore della loro esclamazione era lietamente rafforzato dalla consapevolezza che il nome del compositore poteva leggersi come sigla di Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia. Non fu una sorpresa che la censura nel reazionario Regno di Napoli respingesse un'opera culminante nell'assassinio di un re o che Verdi la trasferisse a Roma per cercare un compromesso. La trama era originariamente incentrata sull'assassinio di Gustavo III di Svezia nel 1792. Si trattava di un episodio

storico relativamente recente avvenuto in una nazione relativamente non lontana. Per la prima romana, furono ampliate le distanze dal punto di vista temporale e geografico, trasferendo la vicenda nella Boston del Seicento. Questa versione, in cui i protagonisti portavano nomi italiani, fu eseguita per oltre un secolo e l'ambientazione svedese fu ripristinata con regolarità sempre maggiore dalla metà del XX secolo in poi.

Anche tutto questo è interessante in sé; peccato che produttori, critici e accademici abbiano incentrato l'attenzione su questi temi come se fossero fondamentali per apprezzare l'opera. A leggere alcuni commenti moderni si potrebbe immaginare che sia importante comprendere questo capitolo della storia svedese e, incidentalmente, dare peso alla nozione dell'omosessualità di Gustavo. Gli ideali del Risorgimento e le preoccupazioni generali sull'illuminazione e sulla sovversione sono inoltre vagliati nel moderno tentativo critico di stabilire l'"argomento" dell'opera. A causa di tali preoccupazioni *Un ballo in maschera* ha subito allestimenti teatrali "concettuali" che, nella peggiore delle ipotesi, sono stati talmente fuorvianti per la mente passando per la vista da lasciare all'udito solo una funzione marginale, accessoria.

La perversità di tutto questo sarà evidente agli ascoltatori inglesi che si accostano nuovamente all'opera adesso in questa traduzione inglese, come deve essere per coloro che la conoscono e l'amano attraverso gli allestimenti nell'italiano originale. I vantaggi particolari di un testo inglese per un pubblico anglofono includono la probabilità di comprendere meglio la congiura, il motivo della visita del re alla zingara e i particolari degli avvertimenti e riconoscimento al ballo. Ma in generale la musica e l'azione narrano la storia insieme, in inglese o in italiano. E senza la musica di Verdi (sebbene questo si dedurrebbe appena dalla maggior parte delle recensioni attuali) le parole e le azioni sono artisticamente prive di valore o potere di sopravvivenza.

Un fattore di sopravvivenza per l'opera è la magnificenza della scrittura verdiana per il canto. In un periodo in cui tali opere erano fuori moda tra la classe intelligente e colta, l'emozione del grande canto continuava a sorreggere lo spettacolo. In generale *Un ballo in maschera* non riuscì a convincere quando fu riproposto al Covent Garden nel 1919 ma, come riferì un critico, "Le noiose convinzioni non valgono un fico quando Martinelli [Giovanni Martinelli, il tenore di quello

spettacolo] regala al pubblico un tesoro di sfumature". Pensiamo a tutti i grandi cantanti che hanno interpretato le tre parti principali, con i risultati talvolta notevoli degli Oscar e delle Ulriche: queste sono parti dell'eredità generale dell'opera. Ma, essenzialmente, per quello che è *Un ballo in maschera*, bisogna richiamare alla mente le note, il suo *suono*. Le grandi arie, famose su disco molto prima che si realizzasse una registrazione integrale, la dicono lunga. Il duetto d'amore dell'Atto II ("Da mesi non sentivo un applauso così spontaneo" scrive lo stesso critico dello spettacolo del 1919) e i concertati dell'Atto I emergono indelebilmente nella memoria. E a coronamento di tutto è quella sublime frase che si inarca, la voce del soprano che tocca il do alto nella scena della morte del re, che a sua volta coinvolge tanto, attraverso quella figura di tre note sparsa in tutta l'opera. Verdi ebbe poco tempo quando compose quest'opera. La completò in due mesi e mezzo e forse questo aiuta a spiegare come mai, sebbene nessuna delle sue partiture abbia una portata più varia, nessuna possieda un'unità più stretta, più organica.

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¹L'argomento è stato elaborato e approfondito nel saggio dell'autore su *Un ballo in maschera* pubblicato nel programma del Festival di Salisburgo del 1990.

Argomento

COMPACT DISC ONE

Atto I

Scena 1

[1] – [2] Un gruppo di cortigiani e supplicanti attende il Re e comprende sudditi fedeli e alcuni scontenti guidati dal conte Ribbing e dal conte Horn, che complotano per assassinarlo. [3] – [4] Quando Oscar, suo fattorino, gli mostra l'elenco degli invitati al ballo in maschera che si prepara, il sovrano è eccitato nel vedere il nome di Amelia, moglie del suo amico e segretario Ankarstroem. [5] Nessuno sa del suo amore segreto e Ankarstroem attribuisce i suoi sbalzi di umore al giustificato timore di una congiura. [6] Gustavo rifiuta di ascoltare gli avvertimenti di Ankarstroem e preferisce fidarsi del suo popolo che lo ama e lo proteggerà.

[7] Arriva un giudice e chiede al re di condannare Ulrica, una zingara che, secondo alcuni, ha il dono di leggere nel futuro.

[8] Oscar la difende vivacemente [9] – [10] e al re viene l'idea di travestirsi e andare a farle visita con il suo seguito. Tutti decidono di incontrarsi più tardi quella notte alla sua capanna.

Scena 2

[11] Ulrica, circondata da donne e ragazzi, esegue un rito satanico. [12] Arriva il re travestito. [13] Quando Ulrica predice una promozione a Cristiano, un giovane marinaio, [14] il Re scrive in fretta un biglietto su un rotolo di denaro e lo sistema nella tasca del marinaio. La profezia di Ulrica si è così avverata e i presenti esaltano i suoi poteri.

Entra il servitore di Amelia e chiede un colloquio a nome della sua padrona. Ulrica manda via tutti, ma Gustavo si nasconde. [15] È stupefatto quando arriva Amelia. La donna, tormentata dall'amore proibito per il re, è venuta a chiedere consiglio alla zingara. [16] Ulrica le ordina di raccogliere un'erba a mezzanotte sotto il patibolo. [17] Quando Amelia accetta di andare, Gustavo decide di seguirla.

[18] – [19] Arrivano i cortigiani e Oscar travestiti e scherniscono Ulrica. [20] – [21] Il re, vestito da pescatore, le chiede di rivelargli il futuro. Ignara della sua identità, la zingara gli

predice sfortuna e, dietro le sue insistenze, [22] gli predice la morte per mano della prossima persona che gli stringerà la mano. Anckarstroem, che arriva in ritardo, saluta il Re. La profezia sembra così contraddetta, soprattutto perché solo adesso Ulrica riconosce il suo ospite. La zingara continua ad ammonirlo contro la congiura, ma Gustavo la ignora.

Atto II

[23] È mezzanotte sotto il patibolo. [24] – [25] Amelia è venuta a cercare l'erba ed è tormentata dal suo conflitto fra amore e dovere. [26] – [28] È stupefatta quando compare il re e dichiara il suo amore per lei. Anche dopo aver sottolineato che è la moglie del suo migliore amico, alla fine la donna è costretta ad ammettere che ricambia il suo amore.

[29] Anckarstroem li sorprende insieme, ma nell'oscurità non riconosce la moglie. Ha seguito il Re, consapevole dei rischi che il sovrano corre costantemente. I congiurati si avvicinano. Anckarstroem si dichiara pronto a tenerli a bada e convince Gustavo a fuggire. [30] – [31] Dopo alcune suppliche soffocate di Amelia, Gustavo accetta, a patto che il suo amico accompagni la donna fino alla porta della città senza chiedere il suo nome né

guardarla in viso. Anckarstroem promette di esaudire questa richiesta e il Re si allontana.

[32] I congiurati sorprendono l'uomo che pensano sia Gustavo e la sua nuova amante. Vedendo che si tratta invece di Anckarstroem, cercano di obbligarlo a rivelare l'identità della donna. Amelia, terrorizzata dalle minacce al marito, lascia scivolare il velo. Anckarstroem rimane inorridito. [33] Mentre i congiurati si allontanano, ridendo alle sue spalle, chiede a Ribbing e Horn di andare a casa sua il giorno dopo e riaccompagna la moglie in città.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Atto III

Scena 1

[1] Anckarstroem si prepara a uccidere Amelia per vendicare il suo adulterio con il Re. La donna ammette di amare Gustavo, ma nega di aver tradito il marito. [2] Quando le sue proteste vengono ignorate, si rende conto che la morte è inevitabile e supplica di poter dire addio al figlio. [3] – [4] Anckarstroem accetta e, rimasto solo, rivolge la sua ira contro Gustavo, poi decide che dovrà essere il re a morire. [5] All'arrivo di Ribbing e Horn, Anckarstroem dichiara di essere a conoscenza

del complotto contro il Re, ma chiede di unirsi a loro, [6] giurando sulla vita del figlio. [7] I tre decidono di estrarre a sorte il nome di chi dovrà colpire a morte il re. [8] Entra Amelia e Anckarstroem le chiede di estrarre uno dei nomi scritti su delle strisce di carta e sistemati in un vaso. [9] La donna estrae il nome del marito e capisce cosa sta succedendo. [10] – [11] Entra Oscar con un invito al ballo in maschera di quella sera e Anckarstroem accetta a nome suo e della moglie. Il ballo gli offre una possibilità ideale di assassinare il re. Insieme i congiurati decidono il proprio travestimento e la parola d'ordine: "morte".

Scena 2

[12] – [13] Gustavo ha deciso di allontanare Anckarstroem e Amelia dalla sua corte. [14] Oscar gli consegna una lettera anonima che lo avverte del pericolo di essere assassinato al ballo, ma il Re è deciso a utilizzare la festa per vedere Amelia per l'ultima volta.

Scena 3

[15] – [17] Al ballo, Anckarstroem fa delle domande a Oscar per farsi rivelare quale sarà il travestimento del Re. [18] Anche Amelia riconosce Gustavo ma, nonostante le sue suppliche, non riesce a convincerlo a lasciare la

fešta. Entrambi si dichiarano amore, ^[9] ma Anckarstroem si lancia fra loro e commette il premeditato delitto. Le maschere sono strappate e l'identità del assassino è rivelata. ^[20] Con le sue ultime parole, Gustavo protesta l'innocenza di Amelia e perdona l'amico. Il popolo esprime il proprio amore per il re assassinato.

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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 specializzato nel repertorio verdiano. Ha al suo attivo una lunga collaborazione con la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, dove ha interpretato numerosi ruoli tra cui Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), il 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*) e Jacopo (*I due Foscari*).

Per la Metropolitan Opera è comparso nelle vesti di Alfredo (*La traviata*), Radames (*Aida*), ha interpretato *La Bohème* e *Rigoletto*, oltre a vestire i panni di Turiddu (*Cavalleria*

rusticana) e Canio (*Pagliacci*). In Nord America inoltre è stato impegnato con i teatri lirici di Chicago, San Francisco, San Diego, Vancouver e ha svolto concerti con le orchestre sinfoniche di Philadelphia, Cleveland, Montreal e Ottawa, e con il Cincinnati Festival. È comparso a São Paulo e Santiago. Frequente ospite della Bayerische Staatsoper di Monaco, ha interpretato *Un ballo in maschera*, *Il trovatore*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Tosca*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Aida* e *Otello*. Ha cantato nei teatri lirici di Vienna, Berlino, Bonn, Colonia, Amburgo, Nizza, Zurigo, Parigi, Oslo, Bruxelles, Barcellona, Oviedo, all'Arena di Verona e a Torino. Inoltre ha un rapporto particolare di collaborazione con la Welsh National Opera e svolge un'intensa e ricca carriera concertistica.

Le serie televisive di Dennis O'Neill per la BBC hanno riscosso enorme successo e il tenore ha successivamente girato un film televisivo su Caruso e un altro in cui interpreta famose colonne sonore. Le sue numerose registrazioni comprendono, per la serie Opera in English di Chandos, *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *La bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, oltre a due dischi di Grande arie operistiche, e, per altre etichette, *La fanciulla del West* diretta da Leonard Slatkin, *La Messa di Requiem* di Verdi

diretta da Sir Colin Davis e un'antologia di arie italiane. Dennis O'Neill ha ricevuto il titolo di Commander of the British Empire nel 2000.

Anthony Michaels-Moore ha frequentato l'università di Newcastle e la Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama con Eduardo Asquez. Oggi studia con Neilson Taylor. È stato il primo vincitore britannico del concorso di Luciano Pavarotti nel 1985. Ha al suo attivo un lungo e fruttuoso rapporto con la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; è diventato membro della Compagnia ed è comparso in numerosi ruoli tra cui Belcore (*L'elisir d'amore*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Ping (*Turandot*), Ned Keene (*Peter Grimes*), Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Lescaut (*Manon di Massenet*), Stankar (*Stiffelio*), Scarpia (*Tosca*); inoltre ha sostenuto il ruolo di protagonista in alcune versioni in concerto della prima versione del *Simon Boccanegra*. È ritornato in veste di ospite per interpretare il ruolo di protagonista nel *Macbeth*, quello del Conte (*Le nozze di Figaro*) e di Rolando (*La battaglia di Legnano*).

Per English National Opera ha interpretato Zurga (*The Pearl Fishers*), Marcello

(*La Bohème*), il Conte (*Figaro's Wedding*), Yeletsky (*The Queen of Spades*) e il ruolo di protagonista in *Eugene Onegin*; per Opera North è stato Escamillo (*Carmen*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Figaro (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Germont (*La traviata*), Posa (*Don Carlos*), e il protagonista in *Hamlet*. La Welsh National Opera lo ha visto nelle vesti di Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) ed *Eugenio Onieghin*. All'estero ha lavorato alla Lyric Opera di Chicago, alla Scala di Milano, all'Opera di Stato di Vienna, alla Metropolitan Opera di New York, all'Opera di San Francisco e di Pittsburgh, all'Opéra de Paris e l'Opéra de Paris-Bastille, al teatro La Monnaie, al San Carlo di Napoli, al Teatro Del Liceu di Barcellona, al festival spagnolo di Oviedo, alla Bayerische Staatsoper di Monaco, alla Deutsche Oper Berlin e al Teatro Colón di Buenos Aires.

Anthony Michaels-Moore ha cantato in concerto con direttori quali sir Colin Davis, Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas, Sir David Willcocks, Andrew Davis, Neeme Järvi, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, André Previn, Michael Gielen, Leonard Slatkin, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, John Eliot Gardiner e Sir Neville Marriner. La discografia comprende *Stabat Mater* di Szymanowski, *Carmina*

Burana, La vestale, The Fairy Queen, e Orazi e Curiazi di Mercadante per Opera Rara.

Susan Patterson ha conquistato una grande reputazione come soprano lirico-spinto attraverso interpretazioni di successo nei ruoli di Margherita/Elena nel *Mefistofele* di Boito, *Rusalka* di Dvořák; un nuovo allestimento di *Ernani* con la Reisopera nei Paesi Bassi; Mme. De Tourvel (*Dangerous Liaisons*) e *Tosca* con la Washington Opera; Mimì (*La Bohème*) e *Aida* con l'Opera di Baltimora; e *Manon Lescaut* allo Spoleto Festival USA. Ha esordito alla Scala con Riccardo Muti nella *Lodoiska* di Cherubini. Ha interpretato la *Messa di Requiem* di Verdi con l'Opera di Washington diretta da Plácido Domingo in occasione del centenario della morte del compositore ed è comparsa a Monte Carlo in un concerto di beneficenza con Luciano Pavarotti.

Si è esibita spesso con l'Opera di San Francisco in ruoli che comprendono Angelica (*Orlando Furioso* di Vivaldi), Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*), Constanze (*Il ratto dal serraglio*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), e Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). In Europa ha cantato con l'Opera dei Paesi Bassi in *Le Comte Ory* e *Mitridate*; è comparsa a Aix-en-Provence nel ruolo di Constanze, e con

l'Opera di Colonia e l'Opéra-Comique di Parigi in *L'occasione fa il ladro. La traviata* ha un ruolo particolarmente importante nella carriera di Susan Patterson, che l'ha interpretata negli Stati Uniti, e inoltre con i teatri di Vancouver e Montreal, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera e Canadian Opera Company.

Le interpretazioni concertistiche di Susan Patterson comprendono *Jephtha*, *Messiah* ed *Elijah* di Mendelssohn, il *Gloria* di Poulenc, lo *Stabat Mater* di Rossini, la nona Sinfonia di Beethoven a Lisbona ed *Egmont* con l'Orchestra sinfonica di San Francisco diretta da Kurt Masur. Inoltre ha cantato lo *Stabat Mater* di Szymanowski e la sinfonia "Resurrezione" di Mahler con l'orchestra Filarmonica di Los Angeles.

Per la serie Opera in English di Chandos ha registrato il ruolo di Elvira nell'*Ernani* di Verdi ed Elettra in *Idomeneo*. Altre registrazioni comprendono *Le Comte Ory* e *Il matrimonio segreto*.

Jill Grove ha frequentato la Music Academy of the West, il New England Conservatory e la Stephen F. Austin State University. Vive a New York e studia con Patricia McCaffrey.

I suoi ruoli alla Metropolitan Opera di New York hanno compreso Magdalene (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) per la direzione di Levine, Madelon (*Andrea Chenier*), Pantalis (*Mefistofele* di Boito), Emilia (*Otello*) e Mary (*Der fliegende Holländer*) per la direzione di Valery Gergiev. Altre apparizioni nei teatri americani comprendono la prima Norna (*Götterdämmerung*) con l'Opera di Dallas, Azucena (*Il trovatore*) con l'Opera di Tulsa, Mistress Quickly (*Falstaff*) con l'Opera di Santa Fe e la prima mondiale di *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* di Tobias Picker per l'Opera di Los Angeles. In Europa ha cantato al Théâtre du Châtelet di Parigi, con la Netherlands Opera (la badessa nel *Re Ruggero* di Szymanowski), Welsh National Opera (Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera*), e English National Opera (Marfa nella *Kovàncina*).

Jill Grove collabora regolarmente con le principali orchestre di tutto il mondo e i loro direttori. Ha interpretato la nona Sinfonia di Beethoven con la Los Angeles Philharmonic, e le orchestre sinfoniche di Atlanta, Houston e Detroit. Ha cantato la Terza sinfonia di Mahler al festival dello Schleswig-Holstein e con l'Orchestra sinfonica di Houston, la *Missa Solemnis* di Beethoven, *Alexander Nevsky*

di Prokofiev con la National Symphony Orchestra, e la sinfonia "Jeremiah" di Bernstein al festival di Ravinia. È membro del Grand Opera Studio di Houston e in questa veste ha interpretato numerosi ruoli con la compagnia, tra cui Anne Kronenberg alla prima mondiale di *Harvey Milk*, e Tisbe ne *La Cenerentola* con Cecilia Bartoli.

Christopher Purves ha studiato inglese presso il King's College di Cambridge prima di esibirsi e registrare con l'innovativo complesso rock *Harvey and the Wallbangers*. Quando il gruppo si è sciolto nel 1988 ha ripreso gli studi di canto con David Keren, Diane Forlano e Janice Chapman.

I suoi impegni operistici comprendono Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) per la Welsh National Opera, la Scottish Opera e Opera North; Marcello (*La Bohème*) per la Scottish Opera; Papageno (*Il flauto magico*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*) per Welsh National Opera e Opera North; il Podestà (*La gazza ladra*) per la Garsington Opera; Siegfried (*Genoveva*) e Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) per Opera North. Ha creato il ruolo del Boia in *Ines de Castro* di James Macmillan e ha interpretato *Parthenogenesis* di Macmillan al Festival di Edimburgo, dove è comparso anche nelle vesti

di Cecil nella *Maria Stuarda* diretta da sir Charles Mackerras.

Gli impegni concertistici comprendono la Messa in do maggiore di Mozart a Aix-en-Provence con i Sixteen, i *Vespri del 1610* di Monteverdi con Richard Hickox, la Messa in re minore di Bach al festival di La Chaise-Dieu, *Judas Maccabeus* di Handel a Norimberga e *Saul* con il Gabrieli Consort ai festival del Covent Garden e di La Chaise-Dieu, *Apocalypse* di John Tavener ai Prom con la City of London Sinfonia, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* di Poulenc con la London Sinfonietta diretta da sir Simon Rattle, *War Requiem* di Britten e la *Creazione* di Haydn con la Ulster Orchestra, e *Belshazzar's Feast* di Walton con la English Northern Sinfonia diretta da Paul Daniel e con la Hallé. Christopher Purves ha svolto il suo primo recital all'Aldeburgh Festival nel giugno 2004. La discografia comprende il ruolo di protagonista nella *Marriage of Figaro* e Gottardo (*The Thieving Magpie*) per la serie Opera in English di Chandos.

Nato nel Lancashire, **Brindley Sherratt** ha studiato tromba e canto presso la Royal Academy of Music.

Le sue regolari apparizioni in concerto comprendono la *Passione secondo San Giovanni*

con Trevor Pinnock a Londra e Lucerna, la *Messa di Requiem* e la Messa in do minore di Mozart ai festival di Swansea e York con Jane Glover e i London Mozart Players, *Judas Maccabeus* e i *Vespri* di Mozart all'inaugurazione della Symphony Hall con la City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, la *Passione secondo San Giovanni* a Bonn e *Les Noces* di Stravinskij a Parigi con Pierre Boulez e l'Ensemble Intercontemporain, *Canticum Sacrum* di Stravinskij a Parigi con la BBC Symphony Orchestra, l'opera *Il prigioniero* di Dallapiccola a Torino, e il *Messiah* e il *Te Deum* di Teixeira con Harry Christophers a Hong Kong. Le numerose trasmissioni radiofoniche comprendono la Messa in do minore di Mozart, la *Petite Messe solennelle* di Rossini, *Winter Solstice* di Panufnik e *Canticum Sacrum* di Stravinskij.

I suoi ruoli teatrali comprendono Publio (*La clemenza di Tito*) e Plutone (*L'anima del filosofo*) per la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Melisso (*Alcina*) per l'Opéra de Montpellier; Immigration Officer (*Flight* Jonathan Dove) per l'Opera di de Vlaamse; Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*) per la Glyndebourne Touring Opera; Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) e il Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) per la Garsington Opera.

Inoltre ha interpretato le Messe di Haydn in tournée in Svizzera con sir John Eliot Gardiner e il Monteverdi Choir, il *Messiah* negli USA con Robert King, la *Passione secondo San Matteo* con Trevor Pinnock a Vienna, Salisburgo, Parigi e in Giappone, le Cantate di Bach con Gardiner, e *La Creazione* di Haydn con Pinnock al Festival di Losanna.

Linda Richardson è nata nella regione inglese del Cheshire e ha studiato presso il Royal Northern College of Music con una borsa di studio di Peter Moores e poi presso il National Opera Studio.

Come solista della English National Opera Company ha interpretato, tra l'altro, i ruoli di Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*), Micaëla (*Carmen*), Gretel (*Hansel e Gretel*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Mimì (*La Bohème*), Violetta (*La traviata*), Woglinde (*L'oro del Reno*), Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) e i ruoli di protagonista in *The Fairy Queen* e *Alcina*. Ha cantato Karolka (*Jenůfa*), Mimì, Nanetta (*Falstaff*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) e Violetta con Opera North; Lisetta (*La vera costanza*) a Garsington, Norina (*Don Pasquale*) per la Clonter Opera e *The Fairy Queen* a Barcellona.

Le apparizioni in concerto comprendono le prime di diverse opere sconosciute di Haydn con l'English Haydn Festival, il *Requiem* di Brahms con la Northern Sinfonia, il *Messiah* con l'English Chamber Orchestra in Spagna, *Les Illuminations* di Britten con l'Orchestra da camera della radio dei Paesi Bassi e *Carmina Burana* alla Royal Festival Hall. Linda Richardson ha interpretato il ruolo di Annie nell'opera televisiva *When She Died* di Jonathan Dove per Channel 4, e la discografia comprende *Hearts and Flowers*, una collezione di brani vittoriani da salotto.

Roland Wood è nato nella contea inglese del Berkshire e ha studiato presso il Royal Northern College of Music con Patrick McGuigan e Robert Alderson e successivamente presso il National Opera Studio con l'appoggio della Peter Moores Foundation e di English National Opera.

La sua carriera iniziale di baritono basso lo ha visto interpretare i ruoli di Silva (*Ernani*) e Colline (*La Bohème*); Luka (*The Bear*) e Martino (*L'occasione fa il ladro*) per il Walton Trust a Ischia; Zareckij (*Eugenio Oneghin*) per l'Opera dell'Unione Europea. Dopo il passaggio al registro di baritono, i ruoli più recenti comprendono Josev Prasov nella prima

mondiale di *The Bridge* e il Conte (*Le nozze di Figaro*) al Royal Northern College of Music e Opera Holland Park.

Roland Wood ha sostituito diversi ruoli anche per la Glyndebourne Festival Opera e la English National Opera; per quest'ultimo teatro ha esordito nelle vesti del Barone (*La traviata*). È solista della Scottish Opera, per cui ha interpretato, tra l'altro, il Dr Falke (*Die Fledermaus*), Marullo (*Rigoletto*) e Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*).

Ashley Catling ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama con William McAlpine e presso il National Opera Studio con l'appoggio dei Friends of Covent Garden e una borsa di studio Nelly Gröner. I suoi ruoli operistici finora comprendono Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Fenton (*Falstaff*) e Male Chorus (*The Rape of Lucretia*).

È comparso in concerto alla Barbican Concert Hall, presso le Royal Glasgow Concert Halls, alla Queen Elizabeth Hall, a St John's Smith Square e St Martin in the Fields dove ha interpretato, tra l'altro, la *Passione secondo San Matteo*, un recital di brani di Britten per voce e arpa a Aldeburgh, e ha svolto tournée in Europa e negli USA

eseguendo e registrando la nuova opera per video di Steve Reich dal titolo *Three Tales*.

Le sue interpretazioni comprendono *Die Fledermaus* presso la Grand Opera House di Dublino, Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) con Opera Holland Park, Gawain nella prima di *Gawain and the Green Knight*, un'opera di Lynne Plowman con Music Theatre Wales, e Tamino (*The Little Magic Flute*) con Opera North. La discografia include *Contrabandista* e *L'Esule di Granata* per Opera Rara.

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

partecipato a numerose registrazioni nelle applaudite serie di Opera in English con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation.

La **London Philharmonic Orchestra** è da tempo apprezzata per la sua versatilità e l'altissima levatura artistica. Queste qualità sono evidenti nelle sale da concerto e nei teatri, nella ricca discografia pluripremiata, nelle brillanti tournée internazionali e nelle iniziative avanzate svolte nel settore dell'istruzione. Kurt Masur è Direttore stabile dell'orchestra dal settembre del 2000. Tra i suoi predecessori dal 1932, anno in cui sir Thomas Beecham fondava l'orchestra, vanno ricordati sir Adrian Boult, sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt e Franz Welser-Möst. Dal 1992 la London Philharmonic è l'orchestra residente della Royal Festival Hall. Inoltre è l'orchestra sinfonica residente della Glyndebourne Festival Opera da 38 anni.

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 *The Marriage of Figaro*, *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.

On session:
Dennis O'Neill



Bill Cooper



On session:
Anthony Michaels-Moore

Bill Cooper



On session:
Susan Patterson

Bill Cooper



On session:
Jill Grove

Bill Cooper



On session:
Linda Richardson

Bill Cooper

On session:
Christopher Purves



Bill Cooper

On session:
Brindley Sherratt



Bill Cooper

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 Prelude

Act I

Scene 1

A room in the King's palace. At the back, the doors into his rooms. It is morning. Deputies, Gentlemen, Members of the populace, Officers, Counts, Ribbing and Horn and their followers, are waiting for the King.

Introduction

Officers and Gentlemen

- 2** Rest Gustavus, may sweet dreams restore you in this house where you rule as our Lord; rest protected by those who adore you, in the embrace of your bountiful world.

Ribbing, Horn and Henchmen

Sleep surrounded by furious loathing, haunted by victims of your cruel hate; though you wish it, they are not forgotten, we will have our revenge for their fate we remember their fate.

Oscar

- 3** The King approaches.

Gustavus (*greeting the waiting people*)

My loyal subjects and soldiers... I value each and every one... come, show me: I'll read all your petitions.

Petitions, they all shall be considered: I promise I

shall give careful thought to each entreaty, those deserving, I'll answer.
Power has no charm for me unless it lightens the suffering of my people and defies the forces bent on corruption.

Oscar (*to Gustavus*)

Would you like to see the list of your invitations?

Gustavus

Have you included all the lovely ladies?

Oscar (*giving him the paper*)

Here, you can read it.

Gustavus (*reading to himself*)

Amelia... to see that name! Ah that name! Each time I think of her I lose all sense of power and duty.

- 4** There I shall gaze in ecstasy upon that radiant vision, and every word she utters will speak of love, will speak of passion.
Oh stars above descend to us and light our celebration, ah... she is the brightest star that shines here in my heart, she is my heaven.

Ribbing, Horn and their followers (*softly*)

We cannot stay, oh no, we cannot stay because the time is not ripe to strike him; these men appear to like him so we should slip away.

Oscar, Officers and Gentlemen

His generous affection has almost overwhelmed him; our wishes and objections are causing him dismay. It is our wishes and our objections that are the cause of his dismay.

Gustavus

And every word she utters will speak of love. Each word she utters will speak of love.

Scena e cantabile

Gustavus (*to Oscar*)

- 5** Go with the others and wait until I call you.

(*They all leave. Oscar, who is last, meets Anckarstroem at the door.*)

Oscar (*to Anckarstroem*)

Now he is free for you.

Anckarstroem (*aside*)

Why does he seem so sad?

Gustavus (*aside*)

Amelia!

Anckarstroem

Highness!

Gustavus (*aside*)

Oh God! Here is her husband!

Anckarstroem (*approaching*)

My Lord you seem upset, while all around you the people praise your name and applaud you.

Gustavus

All this adulation won't cure my heart. A secret source of worry torments me.

Anckarstroem

What is it?

Gustavus

Ah no, don't ask...

Anckarstroem

I think I know what it is.

Gustavus (*aside*)

He cannot...

Anckarstroem

I'll tell you...

Gustavus

Go on...

Anckarstroem

I'll tell you... Within this royal palace you cannot sleep in safety.

Gustavus

Continue.

Anckarstroem

Some evil assassins are plotting in the shadows, your life itself is threatened.

Gustavus (*joyfully*)

That's what you came to tell me? And nothing more?

Anckarstroem

I have their names to show you.

Gustavus

Why bother? I shall forget them.

Anckarstroem

You have to be informed.

Gustavus

Silence: I cannot defile my honour with their blood. No never. I won't. The world respects me, my people love me and God himself protects me.

Anckarstroem

- [6] Please reflect upon your duty
and the hopes of this glorious nation;
here the people in their thousands
look to you for inspiration!
If we lose you, what will happen
in the years that lie ahead?
Will your life be free forever
from the work of cruel assassins,
can the love of friend or stranger
always shelter you from danger?
Love is weak compared to hatred,
which may quickly strike its victim dead.
If we lose you, what will happen
in the years that lie ahead?

Oscar (*entering*)

- [7] The Lord Chief Justice!

Gustavus

Admit him.

Lord Chief Justice (*giving him dispatches to sign*)
Highness!

Gustavus

What is this? A woman to be banished! What
happened? Who is this woman? Is she guilty?

Lord Chief Justice

Her name's Ulrike and I hear that she is a gypsy.

Oscar

She has a massive following, everyone knows her.
And they say that she sees into the future...

Lord Chief Justice

To a dark, gloomy cave she summons the rabble,
I insist that her influence must be malign. I wish
to see her banished, I stand by my decision.

Gustavus (*to Oscar*)

Is this the truth?

Oscar

My Lord I must defend her.

- [8] She conjures from afar, thunder and lightening,
however brave you are, it can be frightening.
For all believers, she weaves her magic,
cheerful or tragic, they want to hear;
they say the devil has her ear! Ah!
They say the devil has the witch's ear!

Gustavus

A pretty couple they must appear!
Satan and seer!

Oscar

All those who visit her return delighted,
saying how wise she is and how far-sighted;
sailors and soldiers, young ones and older,
know, for the future, what they must fear;
they say the devil has her ear!
They say the devil has the witch's ear!

Lord Chief Justice

She must be banished.

Oscar

You have no case against her.

Lord Chief Justice

Have her banished.

Gustavus

Come now... bring in the people: I have a good
idea.
(*Anckarstroem and Oscar call back those who had
left.*)

- [9] My friends will you come with me to visit the
enchantress,
disguised so no one knows us? I want to go.

Anckarstroem

Why so? Why so?

Gustavus

Her story is intriguing.

Anckarstroem

It's not a wise decision.

Oscar

I'll join the expedition, I think it will be fun!

Anckarstroem

But who you really are might be discovered.

Gustavus

How scary!

Ribbing and Horn

His right hand man is wary, he's such a cautious
one.

Gustavus

Disguise me as a fisherman, find me the clothes.

Ribbing and Horn

And if we go along maybe the path to vengeance
will appear.

Gustavus

- [10] We can all go and see her together
and abandon ourselves to the pleasure;
if we hide in the crowd of believers,
just imagine the sights we will see.

Anckarstroem

Go and see her, but I am suspicious
of the dangers that may be around you;
he is kind but he can be capricious
and ignores every warning from me.

Oscar

I can ask her the questions the ladies
say she always is able to answer;
whether destined for heaven or Hades,
I'll find out what the future will be.

Gustavus

My friends I am expecting you
at three o'clock, in disguise,
to kneel before an oracle
so splendid and so wise.

Oscar and Chorus

Oh yes, we shall be ready there
at three o'clock, in disguise;
to kneel before an oracle
so splendid and so wise.

Ribbing, Horn and Henchmen

We must all be alert to the chances
that this curious adventure advances;
and perhaps if the stars are against him
we can send him to hell and be free.

Gustavus

We can all go and see her together
and abandon ourselves to the pleasure;
for today let us laugh and be merry
while this life is as good as can be.
this life was never dearer to me.

Chorus

Yes! Yes!

Oscar

I shall know if my stars are propitious
and the future they promise for me.

Ribbing, Horn and Henchmen

...and perhaps if the stars are against him
we can send him to hell and be free.

Chorus

And at last I can joke and be foolish
in the sweet life that heaven gave me.

Gustavus

My friends I am expecting you
at three o'clock, in disguise.

Others

Oh yes we shall be ready there
at three o'clock, in disguise;
to kneel before an oracle
so splendid and so wise.

Scene 2

The fortune-teller's cave. To the left is a hearth; the fire is burning and the cauldron smokes on a tripod; on the same side is an opening to a dark recess. On the right is a staircase which turns and disappears out of sight. At its foot is a secret door. At the back is the main entrance door with windows at the side. In the middle is a rough table, where Ulrike sits, and a boy and girl are having their fortunes told.

Invocation

Women and Children

- [11] Quiet... her trance must not be interrupted...
She will summon the devil, then he will answer!

Ulrike

Lord, from the deepest underworld,
arise and climb the ether,
Sparing your bolts of thunder appear
and enter my dwelling.

Three times the owl has hooted
with calls that fill the sky;
the salamander's flaming mouth
three times has hissed its cry;
and rotting corpses from the graves
three times have made reply.

(Gustavus, dressed as a fisherman, pushes through the crowd. He cannot see any of his court.)

Gustavus

- [12] I'm first to be here!

Women and Children

Intruder, no entry.
(He moves back, smiling.)
There is a luminous glow in the darkness.

Ulrike (exultantly)

At last! At last!
What ecstasy! Satan has come, has found me;
I feel the power of his embrace
and his bright aura around me!
The blazing torch of knowledge
is burning in his hand.
He answered to my entreaty,
he came at my command.
Nothing eludes me, nothing can hide from me,
nothing escapes me,
nothing can hide from my all-seeing eyes.

(She strikes the ground and disappears.)

Women and Children

Oh, she is amazing!

Ulrike (from below)

Be silent!

(Cristian breaks through the crowd.)

Cristian

- [13] Allow me to enter, I must know my fortune.
I worked for Gustavus for years as a sailor;
for him I have risked life and limb on the ocean,
I've suffered and struggled without a promotion;
and all through the years he did nothing for me.

Ulrike (reappearing)

Your question?

Cristian

Will I be rewarded for all I have suffered?

Gustavus (aside)

He sounds like a plausible fellow.

Ulrike

Your hand.

Cristian

Please read it.

Ulrike (looking at his hand)

- [14] You can rest assured:
promotion is yours with a handsome reward.
(Gustavus draws out a roll of money and writes on it.)

Cristian

You mock me?

Ulrike

I promise.

Gustavus (*aside, slipping the roll into Cristian's pocket*)
I'll make his dream come true.

Cristian
I'm grateful for such a prediction from you.
(*Searching his pocket he finds the roll of notes and reads excitedly.*)
'Gustavus makes his dear friend Cristian a captain.'
God save us! It is true! Both money and promotion!

Cristian and Women
Amazing! Amazing!
All praise and long life to the immortal enchantress,
the bringer of fortune and riches to all!
(*There is a knocking at the small door.*)
Who's knocking?

(*Ulrike opens the door and a servant enters.*)

Gustavus (*aside*)
Oh heavens! That man in the doorway, he works for Amelia!

Servant (*whispering to Ulrike but overheard by Gustavus*)
Please listen, I'm here for the lady who's waiting outside here, she wants to consult you in private and ask your advice.

Gustavus (*aside*)
Amelia!

Ulrike
These people shall leave; I will see her.

Gustavus (*aside*)
I stay

Ulrike (*turning to the others*)
I cannot make reply to you all unless I commune undisturbed here with Satan. Now leave me, now leave me to search for the truth.

Women and Children
We leave you, we leave you to search for the truth.
We go.

Ulrike
Now leave me.

(*While they all leave, Gustavus hides.*)

Scene and Trio

Ulrike
[15] What brings you here to me?

Amelia
A secret source of worry that passion brought.

Gustavus (*aside*)
A passion!

Ulrike
How can I help you?

Amelia
Tell me... how can I erase from my heart the man whose fatal charm now rules me! He who is the anointed sovereign of this country.

Gustavus (*aside*)
She loves me! Can I believe it?

Ulrike
You shall forget him. I know a secret potion brewed from a magic herb, that can renew the heart. Whoever needs it must go and pluck the leaves themselves, and on the stroke of midnight... in dreadful surroundings.

Amelia
But where?

Ulrike
You dare to go there?

Amelia (*resolutely*)
Yes, I am determined.

Ulrike
Then you must listen.

[16] Step out towards the sunset to seek your dark solution,
go where the moonlight bleakly falls on scenes of retribution;
at night no wise man goes there,
but this elixir grows there,
where guilty men atone for crimes
with slow and painful death.

Amelia
My God! How dreadful!

Ulrike
You look so pale, perhaps you cannot face it?

Gustavus (*aside*)
Oh my poor love!

Ulrike
Are you afraid?

Amelia
I shudder...

Ulrike
Have you the courage?

Amelia
Because this is my duty, I shall find strength to do it.

Ulrike
At midnight?

Amelia
Yes.

Gustavus (*aside*)
I'll follow, you shall not go alone.

Amelia
[17] Oh, help me, God in heaven
to drive this passion from me;
and cool the burning agony
that rages here in my heart.
Grant me, oh dear Lord,
the strength to cure my heart.

Ulrike
Be not afraid, your sorrow
will be gone by tomorrow.

Go, when you taste the remedy,
the yearning will depart.

Gustavus (*aside*)

I am resolved to follow
wherever you may lead me;
for when you sigh Amelia,
your breath sustains my heart.

Voices (*from outside*)

Daughter of Satan, open your portals,
you are ignoring us lesser mortals.

Ulrike (*to Amelia*)

Quickly, now leave me.

Amelia

At midnight...

Ulrike

Now leave me...

Gustavus (*aside*)

I'll follow.

Ulrike

Go quickly. Quickly now leave me.

Amelia

I leave you!

Gustavus (*aside*)

You shall not go alone!

(Ulrike opens the main door. Ribbing, Horn and their followers, Oscar, gentlemen and Officers enter, all curiously disguised. Gustavus mixes with them.)

Scene and Song

Ribbing, Horn and Men's Chorus

[18] Rise, great enchantress, speak to us all;
tell us the future, come when we call.

Oscar

Where is the King?

Gustavus (*to Oscar*)

Don't tell them I am here, keep it a secret.

(*to Ulrike*)

Now wise enchantress, I was the first here,
look at my stars and tell me the worst.

Ribbing, Horn and Men's Chorus

Tell him his fortune.

Gustavus

[19] Do you see the furious billows abating
and will my beloved be faithfully waiting?
She wept when we parted,
so sweet and kind hearted.
When tossed by the tempest my vessel is battered,
I stay on my course though my spirit is shattered,
defying the rage/anger descending on me.
Confer with your devils in lightning and thunder
and though what you find is the ship going under,
no horror will stop me from sailing the sea;
no, no, no, no, no horror will stop me sailing
the sea.

Oscar and Chorus

And though what you find is the ship going under,
no horror will stop him sailing the sea.

Gustavus

I fly with my boat through the wind and the
weather,
we struggle and suffer the danger together;
my ears always ringing with songs I love singing.
I sing the old songs that we sang when I met you,
your kisses, your laughter, I never forget you
nor all of those beautiful things you have said.
Now tell me what destiny may have in store
and say when the grim reaper will come by and
call
for no fear and no terror will enter my head;
no, no, no, no, no fear and no terror will enter
my head.

Oscar and Chorus

No fear and no terror will enter his head.

Ulrike

[20] Reckless stranger, your words are defiant,
but they may yet dissolve into sorrow.
If you are false to the forces of darkness,
neither tears nor regrets will suffice,
and a man who would challenge the devil
must atone at a terrible price.

Gustavus

Come on, my friends.

Ribbing

But who will be first?

Oscar

I shall!

Gustavus (*offering his hand to Ulrike*)

Let me have the honour.

Oscar

Then so be it.

Ulrike (*examining his hand, solemnly*)

I can see you are respected, with Mars the god of
war in your birth sign.

Oscar

She knows him already!

Gustavus

Be quiet.

Ulrike (*disengaging herself from him*)

You are unlucky... go, and leave me... don't ask
me for more.

Gustavus

Come, continue.

Ulrike

No. Leave at once.

Gustavus

Tell me.

Ulrike

Go.

Gustavus

Tell me.

Ulrike

I beseech you.

Oscar and Chorus

You must finish the tale!

Gustavus

I command you!

Ulrike

All right, soon you shall die.

Gustavus

For an honourable death, I'll be grateful.

Ulrike (*with more emotion*)

No, a friend will betray you.

Oscar

Great heaven!

Chorus

Dreadful fate!

Ulrike

It is written in truth.

Chorus

Dreadful fate!

Gustavus (*glancing all around him*)

[21] Her crazy crystal-gazing
is utterly amazing!

I cannot help but laugh at them
because they are misled,
so easily misled.

Ulrike (*passing by Ribbing and Horn*)

I see you men are dwelling
on what I am foretelling,

and since you dare not laugh at me,
what thoughts are in your head?

Ribbing and Horn (*staring at Ulrike*)

Her words are sharp as lances,
luminous her glances.

So if the devil talks to her,
there may be truth in what she said,
there's truth in what she said.

Oscar

Ah! Our master so ill-fated

to fall assassinated?

Ah, when I start to think of that

I fear what lies ahead,

I fear and tremble,

ah when I think,

when I start thinking.

Chorus

Is he so ill-fated

to fall assassinated?

Ah, when I start to think of that

I fear what lies ahead,

I fear and tremble,

ah when I think,

when I start thinking,

Oh dread!

Gustavus

[22] One thing you've yet to tell me. Speak, who will
strike the fatal blow?

Ulrike

The first man to shake you by the hand today.

Gustavus (*lively*)

An easy one!

(*offering his hand to those around him, who do not
wish to take it*)

Which one of you will offer to
prove that this is nonsense? Such cowards!

(*Anckarstroem appears at the entrance. Gustavus
rushes to him and clasps his hand.*)

Here he is.

Oscar and Chorus

Count Anckarstroem!

Ribbing and Horn (*aside*)

Thank heaven, the Fates are on our side.

Oscar and Chorus (*to Ulrike*)

The oracle was lying.

Gustavus

Yes: the man who comes to greet me is my most
faithful friend and colleague.

Anckarstroem

Gustavus!

Ulrike (*recognising the King*)

The King!

Gustavus (*to Ulrike*)

So your devil could neither tell you who I might
be, nor that the judge insisted you should be
banished.

Ulrike

Me?

Gustavus (*throwing her a purse*)

Keep quiet, here's money.

Ulrike

However kind you are, there is a traitor in this
crowd: there may be several...

Ribbing and Horn (*aside*)

God help us!

Gustavus

Enough.

Cristian and Chorus

Long live Gustavus!

Others

Who's shouting?

Cristian and Chorus

Praise him!

Cristian (*to his followers*)

He's here, come gather quickly,
he's here, our noble friend and father.
(*They all enter.*)

Greet him with me
and bow your heads before him;
let us raise our voices
in a hymn of praise.

Cristian and Chorus

Hail to our gracious sovereign
loved by this noble nation;

long may good fortune smile on you,
long may you rule us, glorious and free.

Oscar

Your people all reward you,
lovingly they applaud you;
to hear this joyful praise I know
how happy you must be.

Gustavus

Can I admit suspicion
in my august position,
when people in their thousands know
they'd gladly die for me?

Anckarstroem

Always the shouts of glory
hide quite a different story;
they may conceal a hypocrite
planning some evil deed.

Ribbing, Horn and HENCHMEN

We never will get near him.
while all these idiots cheer him,
praising their hero mindlessly,
they are innocent and naïve.
And praise him mindlessly,
they are innocent and naïve.

Ulrike

He would not listen further,
though I foresee his murder;
he laughed at my prediction
but his fate already is sealed.

Act II

Prelude, Scene and Aria

[23] [Prelude]

*Amelia appears at the top of the hill. During the
Prelude she kneels and prays. Then she rises, and
gradually comes down the hill.*

Amelia

[24] Here I am in this place of retribution where the
guilty must perish! Over there is the gallows...
there is the plant, how green it grows... Now
onward. Ah! My poor heart is frozen! Even the
sounds beneath my feet fill me with terror and
have me shuddering in horror! And what if I
should die here? Well then!... If it has
been decided that here I meet my fate... then
take me. So be it!

(She begins to move again.)

[25] When I pluck these dark stems from the dry land,
have their magical power in my hand,
when oblivion erases my sorrow
and that image will fade from my mind:
what is left you when love is no more?
Ah! Who is weeping, what power restrains me?
What is waiting upon this grim pathway?
Be courageous, oh my heart be of granite,
don't betray me by yielding to tears,
or else silence your beating and die,
fade to nothing, fade to nothing,
my poor heart, I cry.
(Midnight strikes.)
It is midnight!...

Ah! What is that?

A skull on the pathway,
hovering and sighing!

Ah, it is staring with a furious anger
and it mocks me, it mocks with a terrible glare!

Ah!

It is mocking, it is mocking with a terrible glare!
(She falls to her knees.)

Give me courage and strength, oh dear Lord!
Oh, have mercy on me evermore.

(Gustavus appears unexpectedly.)

Duet

Gustavus

[26] Here at last.

Amelia

Oh God!

Gustavus

Be calm...

Amelia

Ah!...

Gustavus

Are you frightened?

Amelia

Ah! A disaster...

You must go... I am... a victim...
and you know you must save my honour...
or the shame, remorse and horror
will destroy me and break my heart.

Gustavus

I must leave you? No, no never:
No I cannot, for I am burning
with an everlasting yearning.

Amelia

Highness, be kind and pity me.

Gustavus

Why these words when I adore you?
Listen calmly I implore you.
Both your honour and your name
will never suffer any shame.

Amelia

But Gustavus I belong...
to your closest friend and colleague...

Gustavus

Hush Amelia...

Amelia

I am the wife of the man who would die,
and die gladly for you...

Gustavus

Ah so cruel, still reminding me,
yes I know that this is true.

Gustavus

[27] You must know that I too have been aching
with remorse that torments all my being,
but how can I attend to its pleading
while I long for the one I adore?
You would only sleep on without waking
if your own heart were beating no more.

Every night has me raging and burning
in the anguish that always is with me;
and I constantly ask God to give me
that same pity you're longing for too.
But I never could think of returning
to a life on this earth without you.

Amelia

God! Bring me comfort and help him believe me,
as I stand between death and damnation;
will you open the door to salvation?
Guide my faltering steps, let me through.
(*to Gustavus*)
You must go: I won't listen;
oh, leave me, oh, leave me, ah!
I belong to the man who would perish for you.

Gustavus

You, my life, my star, my heaven,
you my heaven, will you tell me...

Amelia

Ah, have mercy!

Gustavus

Say you love me...

Amelia

Ah, Gustavus!

Gustavus

Only say it, only say it...

Amelia

Ah, yes... I... love you...

Gustavus

My Amelia!

Amelia

But I know that you will protect me
from my heart!

Gustavus (*ecstatically*)

You love me, you love me!
There is no longer any place for my remorse
or for my friendship:
let all things vanish, let all things vanish
away except my love.

[28] The sweetest words I ever heard
are those that you have spoken;
a passion has awoken
within your sparkling eyes.
My star that shines in darkness
and needs no brightness from above,
oh, bathe me in your love,
the sun shall never rise!

Amelia

Upon the bed where sadly
I dreamt I was forgetting you;
my love returns more madly,
more dazzling in surprise.

Ah, why am I not sighing
and pouring forth my agony?
Be with me as I die,
eternal sleep shall be my prize.

Gustavus

Amelia! You love me, Amelia? You love me?

Amelia

I love you.

(*After the reprise of the duet, the moonlight grows brighter.*)

Scene and trio

Amelia

[29] Oh God! Someone is here!

Gustavus

Who could it be in the shadow of the gallows?
Ah! I can see him... your husband!

Amelia

My husband!

Gustavus

You here?

Anckarstroem

I must warn you that you are surrounded by
men who would kill you.

Gustavus

Who are they?

Anckarstroem

They are traitors.

Amelia (*aside*)

Oh God!

Anckarstroem

I ran past, concealed in the darkness,
they will have assumed I am one of their comrades.

I heard one call out to another:

'I see him, we've caught him:
in flagrante with some unknown lady.'
another then whispered: 'a fleeting liaison!
My dagger will end all their tender embraces,
too late to regret it, he's dug his own grave'.

Amelia (*aside*)

I'm dying.

Gustavus (*to Amelia*)

Have courage!

Anckarstroem

But Sir take my cloak, be careful,
the pathway to freedom is there.

Gustavus (*taking Amelia by the hand*)

I must take you with me!

Amelia (*to Gustavus*)

Impossible! Go!

Anckarstroem (*moving to Amelia*)

They saw you, my lady, but he may avoid them
by leaving without you.

(*Anckarstroem goes to the back to see if anyone is approaching.*)

Amelia (*to Gustavus*)

You must go alone!

Gustavus

And leave you abandoned?

Amelia

The way will be clear if you hurry, go quickly...

Gustavus

If I leave you here, what can you tell him?
What can you tell him? No, no, I'd rather be dead.

Amelia

Go now, or I tear off the veil on my head.

Gustavus

You would not...

Amelia

I promise.

Gustavus

You must not.

Amelia

Then go.

(Gustavus hesitates, but she repeats the command with her hand. Anckarstroem returns and Gustavus goes towards him.)
(aside)

If trying to save him has not been in vain,
if all this has not been in vain,
I never shall fear any danger again.

Gustavus *(to Anckarstroem, solemnly)*

^[30] My friend, I ask you a personal favour;
will you undertake such a mission for me?

Anckarstroem

You know you can trust me.

Gustavus *(indicating Amelia)*

Then promise me, swear not to look at her face
or ask for her name...
in silence escort her away from this place.

Anckarstroem

I promise.

Gustavus

When you safely arrive at the city, take different
pathways.

Anckarstroem

I promise ... I obey.

Amelia *(to Gustavus)*

^[31] Do you hear how the menacing voices
echo murderous threats all around you?
From the rocks over there where they're hiding,
men will strike with no further delay.
They are raging with furious anger,
you will soon be completely surrounded
and their wrath will be falling upon you,
quickly go and escape, go, go, go!

Anckarstroem *(emerging from the back where he has been looking around)*

You must flee, you must flee, on the path I hear
the steps coming steadily nearer;
and the daggers are all at the ready
for the order that they will obey.
Quickly go while the path is still open,
here you cannot remain for a moment;
you must live for the sake of your people,

do not martyr yourself in this way, go, go, go,
don't martyr yourself this way, go, go, go,

Gustavus *(aside)*

Can I think of the traitors and murderers
who are threatening to come here and kill me?
No! For I am the one who is guilty
and my friend is the one who's betrayed.
Were I innocent I would attack,
but because of my love I am fleeing.
In the grace of your mercy, oh Lord
look upon her, protect her I pray.
May the grace of our merciful Lord
be upon her, protect her I pray, etc.

Amelia and Anckarstroem

Go quickly...

(Gustavus leaves.)

Scene, chorus and quartet: second finale

Anckarstroem

^[32] Stay close to me.

Amelia *(aside)*

Oh heavens!

Anckarstroem

Why be so frightened? You are safe here with me.
I am a friend and you have no need to fear.

Conspirators *(in the distance)*

His last moment is upon him,
as we strike without a warning.
In the sun tomorrow morning,
what a pretty sight he'll be.

Amelia

Here they are.

Anckarstroem

Quickly. Hold on tight to my arm.

Amelia

I fear I'm dying!

Ribbing *(to Horn)*

Do you see the snow-white veil
that conceals his latest conquest?

Horn

Paradise will soon become the inferno.

Anckarstroem

Who goes there?

Ribbing

Not Gustavus!

Horn

How did we lose him?

Conspirators

Not Gustavus!

Anckarstroem

No, the man who stands to challenge you is me.

Horn *(mocking)*

His accomplice!

Ribbing

We have been much less fortunate than you are:
we have waited all in vain to see a woman in this
place.

Horn

Won't you let us share your pleasure and reveal
the lady's face!

*(Some of the conspirators return with burning
torches.)*

Ankarstroem *(with his hand on his sword)*
Go no further: if you move I draw my dagger.

Ribbing

Would you fight us?

Horn

I'm not frightened.

(The moon shines in all its glory.)

Amelia

Oh, heaven help me!

Conspirators

Drop the dagger...

Ankarstroem

You are traitors!

Horn *(going to tear the veil from Amelia)*
Then who is she?

Ankarstroem *(unsheathing his sword)*
If you insult her you will answer with your life.

*(As they all lunge towards Ankarstroem, Amelia,
beside herself and trembling, lets slip her veil.)*

Amelia

No: don't fight with him...

Ankarstroem *(thunderstruck)*

What!... Amelia!...

Horn, Ribbing and Conspirators

His... wife... Amelia!

Amelia

Oh God! Forgive!

Horn, Ribbing and Conspirators

Amelia! We know her!

Ankarstroem *(trembling)*

Amelia!...

Ribbing

²⁹ We interrupt their stolen kisses,
the rampant lover pursues his missus;
and how romantic, sharing at midnight,
a second honeymoon beneath the stars.

Ribbing and Horn

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!
There will be chatter about this matter,
what a curious little farce!

Ankarstroem *(gazing at the path by which
Gustavus left)*

So he rewards me for his salvation,
my marriage ruined in violation!
From now I cannot again confront him,
I am destroyed for evermore.
He has destroyed me for evermore.

Amelia

From this disaster, where can you hide?

In whom Amelia, can you confide?
Who can you turn to in desperation?
What hand in kindness will dry your eyes?
Where can you hide, wretched Amelia?

Ribbing, Horn and Conspirators

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!
There will be chatter about this matter,
what a curious little farce!
See how a tragedy became a comedy.

Ankarstroem *(approaching Ribbing and Horn
and in a determined voice)*

Will you come and have a meeting
at my house tomorrow morning?

Ribbing

Must we beg you to forgive us?

Ankarstroem

No, I've something else in mind.

Ribbing

Then what is it?

Ankarstroem

I will tell you when you're with me.

Ribbing and Horn

We shall be there.
(as they leave, with their followers)

We should go, by different pathways,
I take one and you another.
In the morning we'll discover
what great things will come to pass.
There will be chatter about this matter,
what a curious little farce.
Let's go.

Conspirators

Let's go.

Ribbing, Horn and Conspirators

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Ankarstroem *(left alone with Amelia, he speaks,
trembling)*

I have promised to escort you to the gates and
leave you there.

Amelia *(aside)*

How the fury in his voice has made me tremble
in despair.

Ankarstroem

Let's go!

Amelia

Be kind, I implore!

Ankarstroem

Let's go!

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act III

Scene 1

A study in Anckarstroem's house. Two bronze vases stand on small fireplace at the side; opposite is a bookcase. At the back there is a magnificent full-length portrait of Gustavus and, in the middle of the stage, there is a table. Enter Anckarstroem and Amelia.

Scene and Aria

Anckarstroem (*putting down his sword and closing the door*)

- [1] Your offence is not forgiven,
nothing ever can excuse you;
all in vain you pray and cry,
blood will flow and you shall die.

Amelia

You condemn me upon suspicion,
of what crime do you accuse me?

Anckarstroem

Of adultery!

Amelia

God save me!

Anckarstroem

You should look to God for mercy.

Amelia

You condemn me on suspicion?

Anckarstroem

No excuses!

Amelia

That's enough for you to kill me?

Anckarstroem

You shall die.

Amelia

There's no justice or compassion
in your cruel insulting heart?

Anckarstroem

Blood will flow and you shall die.

Amelia

That I loved him may be true,
but my loyalty is to you.

Anckarstroem (*picking up his sword again*)

I won't listen.

Amelia

God above knows I admit it,
but no sin has been committed.

Anckarstroem

I won't listen! I won't listen! It's too late....
I'm determined, I resolve that you shall die.

Amelia

Ah! I'm fainting!... So be it, let me...
beg one favour....

Anckarstroem

Not from me. Say your prayers to God in heaven.

Amelia (*kneeling*)

I have one request to make. Hear me. Hear me.
Quietly, it shall be my last.

- [2] I go, but in compassion,
first will you grant me one favour,
let me embrace my child,
bid him farewell forever.
And if you must deny me,
your poor unhappy wife,
do not refuse a mother
who must lay down her life.
I know that in my suffering,
his kisses will console me,
and at the final moment,
let him be there to hold me;
Then as his father strikes me,
he will extend his hand
to close his mother's eyelids,
in a final farewell, in a last farewell.

Anckarstroem (*gesturing towards a door, without looking up*)

- [3] Stand up! I permit you to see your son and say
farewell.

Within the silent darkness, there you may
conceal your shame and my dishonour.
(*Amelia leaves.*)

Not on my wife, nor on that loving mother, do I
seek for vengeance. But the blood of another
will wash away this great insult... your blood
Gustavus!

And as I twist my dagger in that perfidious body,
all the pain I have suffered shall be avenged!

- [4] Shame on you, who defiled my beloved,
you destroyed all I loved, all I lived for.
You were trusted, but one moment of treachery,
and the world has been poisoned for me.
Take my wife! Is that how you reward me
for the trust and the friendship I gave?
So all pleasure becomes distant memory
of embraces that tasted of heaven!
When Amelia, so chaste and so beautiful,
lay beside me and trembled with love.
It is finished: and only the hatred,
and only the murderous hatred
remains in my poor widowed heart.
All the pleasure lost forever,
oh, the promise of love.

(*Ribbing and Horn enter, greeting Anckarstroem coldly.*)

Conspiracy, duet, quartet

Anckarstroem

- [5] We are gathered. Now hear me. All of the plans
you've made are uncovered. You have been
plotting to murder Gustavus.

Horn

You are dreaming!

Anckarstroem (*showing them some papers on the table*)

These papers prove it.

Ribbing

And have you decided to take them straight to
him?

Anckarstroem

No: I want to join with you.

Ribbing and Horn

You are joking.

Anckarstroem

On one condition, you have to trust me and forget your suspicion. I am with you, without hesitation I shall be your accomplice in murder: take my son as your hostage. You may kill him if I fail you.

Ribbing

This change of heart is sudden, I'm not sure that I believe you.

Anckarstroem

Don't ask me to give you the reason.

- [6] I'm with you, I'm with you, let the life of my only son convince you.

Ribbing

He's not lying.

Horn

No, he means it.

Anckarstroem

Still uncertain?

Ribbing and Horn

No more.

Anckarstroem

No more.

Anckarstroem

- [7] Let us all by our shame be united and the thought of one mind be of all, of all. And remember our lives have been blighted by the man on whom vengeance will fall.

Ribbing and Horn

Let us all by our shame be united and the thought of one mind be of all, of all. And remember our lives have been blighted by the man on whom vengeance will fall.

Anckarstroem

- [8] One indulgence I ask of you.

Ribbing

What is it?

Anckarstroem

You allow me to accomplish the deed.

Ribbing

No, your Lordship, he snatched my possessions, so the task falls to me and no other.

Horn

As for me, since he murdered my brother, through the dark years of suffering, revenge on him has been my one obsession; what role will you give me?

Anckarstroem

No arguing, it must be that Fate shall decide this for us.

(He takes a vase from the fireplace and places it on the table. Ribbing writes three names on pieces of paper, and throws them into it.)

Anckarstroem

Who is there?

(Amelia enters.)

You!

Amelia

Oscar has arrived with tonight's invitation.

Anckarstroem

Tonight! Let him wait then. I insist that you stay, since you too play a part in this drama.

Amelia (aside)

Ah, with sorrow my heart is exploding!

Ah, what terror, what fear and foreboding!

Anckarstroem (indicating his wife to Ribbing and Horn)

Have no fear. She knows nothing, perhaps her arrival shall be our advantage.

(to Amelia)

In this urn there are three names.

Your impartial hand must help us to choose one.

Amelia (trembling)

Tell me why.

Anckarstroem (with a thunderous look in his eyes)

Ask no questions, and do as I say.

Amelia (aside)

There is no doubt. It is clear he is forcing me to be an accomplice to murder.

(Shuddering, Amelia slowly approaches the table where the vase has been placed. Anckarstroem watches her all the time with eyes blazing. Finally, Amelia, with trembling hand, takes out one of the pieces of paper, which her husband then hands to Ribbing.)

Anckarstroem

- [9] So which name has been chosen?

Ribbing

Anckarstroem!

Anckarstroem (with exaltation)

I am chosen! Oh, kind fortune I thank you: now the pleasure of vengeance is mine.

Amelia (aside)

It's Gustavus they're planning to murder, their barbarity can go no further!

They are raging in terrible anger and the daggers are ready to strike.

Amelia (aside)

Ah, Gustavus, they are planning your murder, the daggers are ready to strike.

Anckarstroem, Ribbing and Horn

So the traitor completes his own story, he insulted our country's glory.

He deserves for his crimes to be murdered and he pays for them all with his life.

Scene and quintet

Anckarstroem

¹⁰ Now Oscar may enter.

(Oscar enters.)

Oscar (to Amelia)

I am sent here by his Highness to invite you, you and your husband will be welcome at the ball tonight.

Amelia (distressed)

I cannot...

Anckarstroem

Will His Majesty be there?

Oscar

Yes Sir.

Ribbing and Horn (to themselves)

How perfect.

Anckarstroem (to the page, but looking at his companions)

We accept his invitation.

Oscar

It will be a masked ball, quite magnificent...

Anckarstroem

How excellent!

(pointing to Amelia)

Tell him she will come with me.

Amelia (aside)

God save me!

Ribbing and Horn

And the masks will make it easier for the task to be achieved.

Oscar

¹¹ Ah! I know that something wonderful can surely be expected, for all the dazzling beauties of the city will be collected; and hearts will leap as they advance, ah! when they arrive to join the dance.

Amelia (aside)

And it was I, oh misery, who took the fatal paper from the urn of treachery for my tempestuous consort; the sheet where death had signed away that noble man's last chance, his final chance.

Anckarstroem (aside)

Look where he lies in agony, my mind can paint the picture; I see his blood anointing the floor with scarlet tincture; the criminal will perish without a friendly glance.

Ribbing and Horn

He dies at his own masquerade, it could not suit us better, disguised among the party guests, pursuing our vendetta; the ball will be a funeral where phantoms lead the dance.

Amelia (aside)

How I wish I could warn him and yet not betray my husband.

Oscar

I know you will be queen of the dancing.

Amelia (aside)

Ulrike could protect him.

Ribbing and Horn

What are the colours you will wear?

Anckarstroem

You'll easily find me dressed in a sky blue jacket, a crimson ribbon on the shoulder.

Ribbing and Horn

Have you decided on a password?

Anckarstroem

Murder!

Amelia (aside)

How I wish I could warn him!

Oscar

The queen of the dancing!

Scene 2

A sumptuous, small apartment of the King. A table with writing materials; at the back is a great curtain which will be drawn aside to reveal the ball.

Third Finale

Scene and Romance

Gustavus

¹² Perhaps she is safely home now, resting at last. Our duty and our honour come between us and open this chasm. My friend goes as envoy to England, and his Amelia will follow him there. I shall not see her and soon a great distance will part us... my heart be silent. (He writes, and at the moment when he is about to sign, he lets the pen drop.) But am I sure? Oh God, yes it's my duty. (He signs it, and puts the paper in his breast pocket.) Ah, I have signed it, and sacrificed my being.

¹³ But if your light is lost to me forever, my beloved my love will always fly to you wherever you may be waiting. You are the sweetest memory that hides within my heart, that hides forever in my heart. But now one dark obsession has overwhelmed my feelings, will Fate make one concession, grant us one final meeting? I long to have that final chance, one final hour of love. Ah, fate, please grant a final chance, a single moment to celebrate our love, our love once more? Will Fate make one last concession? Ah, let me have one final hour, for us to celebrate our love once more.

(Dance music is heard from within.)

Gustavus

¹⁴ Ah! She is there. How can I see her and tell her what I know I must say? But no, her husband will keep her away.

(Enter Oscar with a paper in his hand.)

Oscar

An unknown lady passed this letter to me. 'For His Majesty' she told me 'be sure you give it him in secret'.

Gustavus *(reading the letter)*

'At the ball, someone will make an attempt on your life, be careful'... But if I stay here, they will say I'm afraid. I'll go: they must not suspect something is wrong. Oscar, go quickly, get ready, then we shall both join the party.

(exit Oscar)

Yes, I will see you Amelia, look on your beauty again, and for a moment, I shall know our love was not in vain.

Scene 3

A splendid and spacious ballroom, brilliantly illuminated and decorated for the party. There is festive music before the dances, and even as the curtain rises the stage is filled with guests. The majority are masked, some in domino, others in gala costumes with uncovered faces. There are some young creoles among the dancing couples. Some

pursue, others escape. There are negro servants and everything exudes an atmosphere of magnificence and high spirits.

Chorus

¹⁵ The hall is filled with laughter, with music and with dancing; music and dancing; as life so quickly passes, enjoy it while you're living, enjoy it while you may. Night of delight and pleasure, we wish you could last forever; why not forget your sorrow, forget it and cast your cares away?

(Ribbing, Horn and their followers enter in blue dominoes, with scarlet sashes. Anckarstroem, in the same costume, slowly approaches them.)

Ribbing *(coming close to Anckarstroem)*

Look, there is one of our men. Murder!

Anckarstroem *(bitterly)*

Yes: murder! He will not come.

Ribbing and Horn

He will not?

Anckarstroem

Waiting like this is useless.

Ribbing

Useless?

Horn

But why?

Anckarstroem

I think someone may have warned him.

Ribbing

So fortune has deceived us.

Horn

He always slips through our fingers.

Anckarstroem

Do keep your voice down; I'm certain that we are being watched.

Ribbing

By whom?

Anckarstroem

Look to your left, see that man all dressed in black.

(They disperse, but Anckarstroem is followed by Oscar, who is masked.)

Oscar *(to Anckarstroem)*

Here is a person I recognise; I can see through you.

Anckarstroem *(drawing back)*

Get moving!

Oscar *(still following him)*

You are Anckarstroem.

Anckarstroem *(pulling off Oscar's mask)*

And you are Oscar.

Oscar

Well what bad manners.

Anckarstroem

Well thank you, do you not think you should guard your sleeping master? You slip off to your dancing, there could be a disaster...

Oscar

But he is here...

Anckarstroem

What? Where?

Oscar

I told you...

Anckarstroem

All right, which one?

Oscar

I cannot say...

Anckarstroem

Stop teasing!

Oscar

You find him for yourself.

Anckarstroem

Come on!

Oscar

But if I betray him, what will be my reward?

Anckarstroem

Be sensible: will you tell me at least how he is dressed?

Oscar (*playing*)

- [16] Why are you caring?
What is he wearing?
It is a secret
and I shall keep it;
Oscar knows well
but will not tell,
Tra la la la la la *etc.*
I have desires
like blazing fires,
I move discreetly
but sing so sweetly;
for love nor gold,
you won't be told,
tra la la la la la *etc.*
Oscar knows well
but will not tell,
tra la la la la la *etc.*

(*At this moment, groups of maskers and dancing couples cross the front of the stage and separate the page from Anckarstroem. They return upstage and disappear at the back.*)

Chorus

- [17] The hall is filled with laughter,
with music and with dancing;
music and dancing;
as life so quickly passes,
enjoy it while you're living,
enjoy it while you may.

Anckarstroem (*catching up with Oscar*)
You can confide in me because I am his friend.

Oscar

Is there something you must ask him,
or maybe you want to share a joke?

Anckarstroem

Precisely.

Oscar

And will you tell him who betrays his little secret?

Anckarstroem

Of course not. It's confidential, I think he ought
to know

Oscar

Must it be now?...

Anckarstroem

I've something quite important to tell him.
Before the night is over he should be told.
He'll be annoyed if I don't tell him,
and then it will be your fault.

Oscar

Well then...

Anckarstroem

You're doing him a favour, it's not for me.

Oscar (*coming closer, and quickly*)

Dressed in a velvet cloak, on his breast a scarlet
ribbon.

(*He is about to move away.*)

Anckarstroem

I've one more thing to ask you.

Oscar (*disappearing in the crowd*)

I've said enough already.

Chorus

The hall is filled with laughter,
with music and with dancing;
music and dancing;
as life so quickly passes,
enjoy it while you're living,
enjoy it while you may.
Night of delight and pleasure,
we wish you could last forever;
why not forget your sorrow,
and cast your cares away?
Why not forget your sorrow
and cast your cares away?

(*Gustavus comes forward, dressed in a black domino with a red ribbon. Behind him follows Amelia in a white domino.*)

Amelia (*quietly, so as not to be recognised*)

- [18] Ah! You are here!... Go quickly!...

Gustavus

So you sent me that letter?

Amelia

There is death all around you.

Gustavus

But nothing that can make me afraid.

Amelia

Go quickly, go quickly. They are intending to
kill you tonight.

Gustavus

But who are you? How do you know this?

Amelia

Don't ask me. I cannot....

Gustavus

Why are you weeping? And why are you so
frightened?
And why are you revealing such passion in your
feelings?

Amelia

But I would save you, but I would gladly die for
you.

Gustavus

In vain you hide, Amelia: my angel come from
heaven.

Amelia (*in despair*)

I love you, I love you desperately,
and on my knees I beg you,
here where a secret murderer
sharpens his vengeful weapon.
You'll die before the morning,
I beg you heed my warning:
save yourself, go, and leave me,
quickly go, before it is too late.

Gustavus

But if you love me Amelia,
my fate is not important...

Amelia

Leave me!

Gustavus

...but if my soul is with you the world can be forgotten.

Amelia

Save yourself!

Gustavus

I have no fear of dying,

Amelia

Go!

Gustavus

... for love is death-defying,

Amelia

Ah, save yourself!

Gustavus

... and all I care to feel is you are my heavenly fate.

Amelia

You'll die before the morning,
I beg you take my warning;
save yourself, go, and leave me,
quickly go, before it's too late.

Gustavus

For love is death-defying,
and all I care to feel is that
you're my heavenly fate.

Amelia

Surely you cannot want to see me
die of shame and horror?

Gustavus

But you are safe. Tomorrow with your husband,
you go...

Amelia

Where to?

Gustavus

Go as envoys to England.

Amelia

We go to England!

Gustavus

My heart will break.... but you must go there...
must leave me.

Amelia

Gustavus!

Gustavus

My heart will break....

Amelia

Gustavus!

Gustavus

My love, Amelia...

Amelia

Gustavus!

*(He tears himself away from her, but after a few
steps he turns to her and says with all his soul.)*

Gustavus

And for the last time, embrace me.

Amelia

Alas!

Gustavus

Say for the last time, you love me.

Amelia and Gustavus

I love you!...

*Anckarstroem (unobserved, throwing himself
between them, and shooting him)*

[19] This is how I embrace you!

Gustavus

Oh no!

Amelia

Oh, save him, oh, save him.

Oscar (running up to him)

Oh God! Someone has shot him!

Chorus

But who?

Where is the traitor?

(Ribbing and Horn appear at the back.)

Oscar (pointing at Anckarstroem)

There he is!...

(All surround him and take off their masks.)

Tutti

Anckarstroem!

Chorus

Ah!

Kill him... the traitor,
the murderer at the ball! Strike him dead!
He shot him! He slaughtered him!
And here in this hallowed hall!
Traitor, traitor at the ball!
Ah! Ah! Ah! Death and vengeance,
death and vengeance on you we call!

Gustavus

No no... release him... release him...
(to Anckarstroem, touching the despatch)
You... hear my words.

[20] She is blameless: as death approaches,
I will swear it and God will hear me:
it is true, I loved Amelia,
but respected her good name.
Take this paper, your new assignment,
you and she will leave together...
It is true, I loved Amelia
but on her there is no shame.

Amelia

What remorse is in my heart,
I'm completely torn apart,
caught between the guilty murderer
and his victim who will die!

Oscar

Oh, despair beyond all measure
as we lose the man we treasure!
On his face I see the agony
as he breathes his last goodbye.

Anckarstroem

Fatal error! Nothing awaits me,
I am cursed and damned forever!
Jealous rage and lust for vengeance
made me strike the fateful blow.

Gustavus

I give thanks that you respect me,
I absolve you with my pardon.

(Ribbing and Horn are still at the back of the stage.)

Chorus

May he rest in peace forever
in your mercy, God in heaven;
Here on earth he ruled us generously,
grant him your celestial love.
May you bless him with your celestial love.

Anckarstroem

He is good and he is generous.

Ribbing

Dear God, have mercy!

Ribbing

He is good and he is generous.

Horn

He is good and he is generous.

Amelia and Oscar

Dear God, please save him ah! save this great
man.

Anckarstroem

God, please save him,
God have mercy and save him.

Ribbing and Horn

Good and generous, so good and generous.

Gustavus

Farewell forever, my people...

Tutti

He is dying!

Gustavus

Farewell beloved country...

Tutti

He is dying!

Gustavus

Farewell... my people... forever ...ah!
Farewell... Alas! I am dying!... My people....
forev... I leave you!

Tutti

What pain and what despair!

English translation © Amanda Holden

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VERDI: A MASKED BALL

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Count Ankarstroem, Gustavus's friend.....Anthony Michaels-Moore *baritone*
Amelia, Ankarstroem's wife.....Susan Patterson *soprano*
Ulrike Arvidson, a fortune teller.....Jill Grove *mezzo-soprano*
Oscar, the King's page.....Linda Richardson *soprano*
Count Ribbing, conspirator against the King.....Christopher Purves *baritone*
Count Horn, conspirator against the King.....Brindley Sherratt *bass*
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