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GREAT OPERATIC ARIAS

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CHANDOS

OPERA IN
ENGLISH



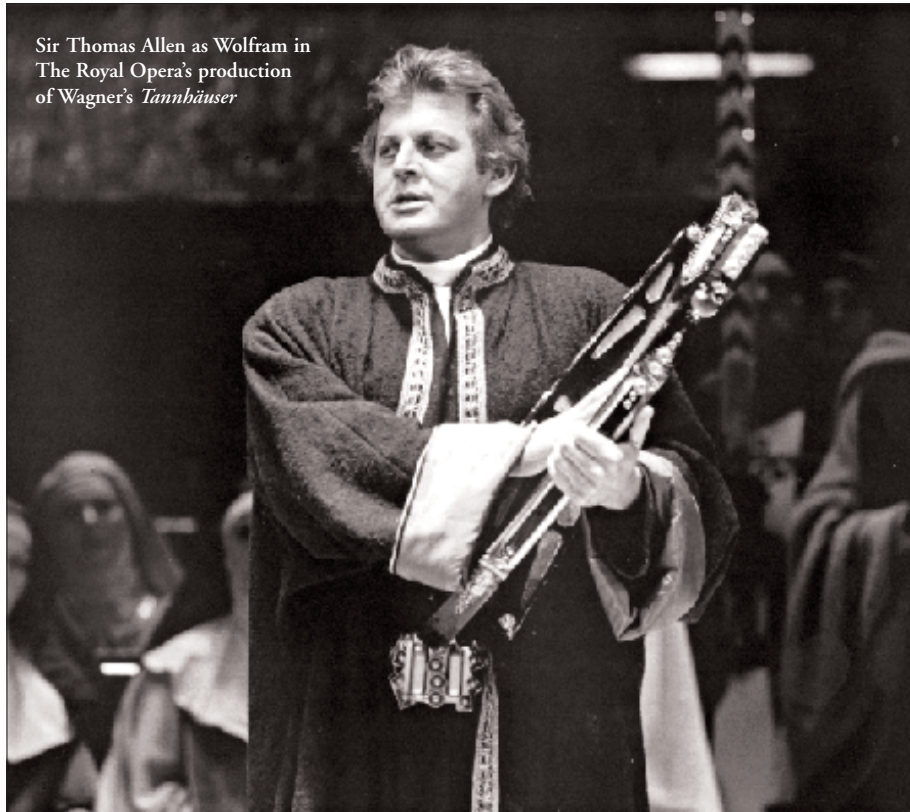
PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



Catherine Ashmore

Sir Thomas Allen as Don Alfonso
in The Royal Opera's production
of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*

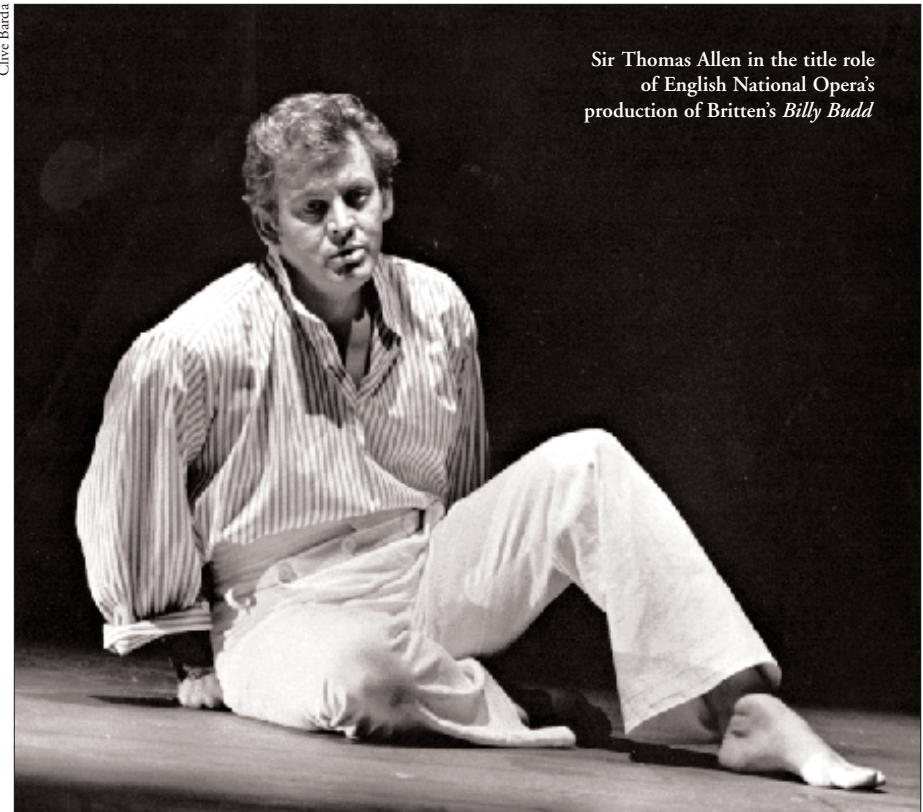
Great Operatic Arias with Sir Thomas Allen



Sir Thomas Allen as Wolfram in
The Royal Opera's production
of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*

Reg Wilson

Clive Bara



Sir Thomas Allen in the title role
of English National Opera's
production of Britten's *Billy Budd*

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with Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

TT 72:35

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Gareth Hancock assistant conductor

David Parry



Sir Thomas Allen
in the title role of
The Royal Opera's
production of Mozart's
Don Giovanni

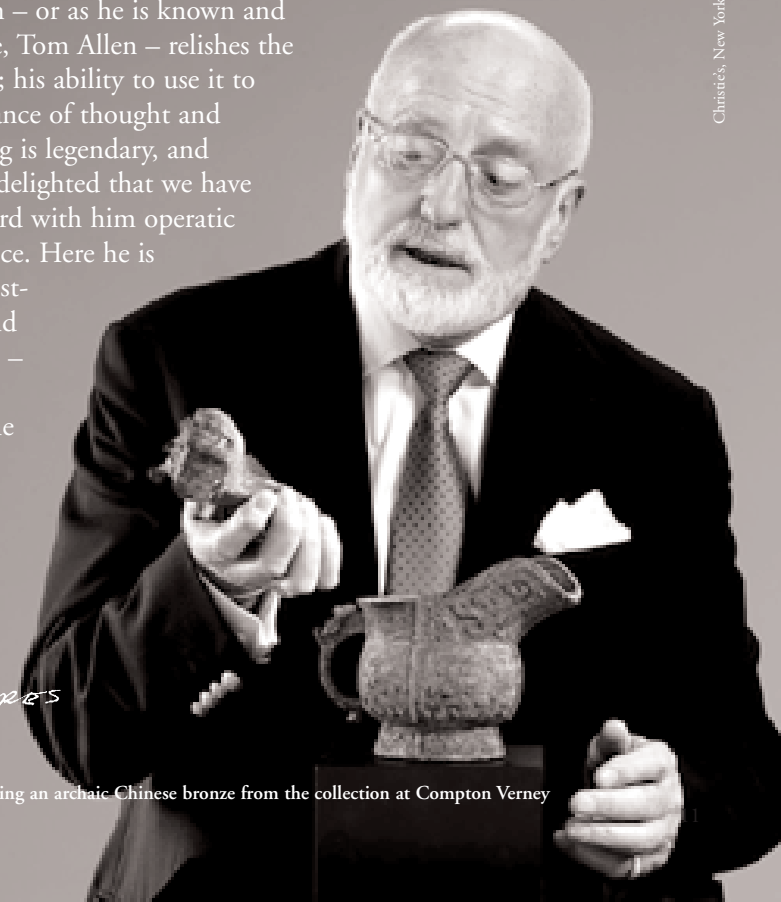
Catherine Ashmore

Sir Thomas Allen – or as he is known and loved world-wide, Tom Allen – relishes the English language; his ability to use it to express every nuance of thought and emotion in a song is legendary, and exemplary. I am delighted that we have been able to record with him operatic pieces of his choice. Here he is in some of his best-known roles – and in some surprises – all of them demonstrating the power of communication through a language understood. Enjoy!

Peter Moores

January 2005

Sir Peter Moores examining an archaic Chinese bronze from the collection at Compton Verney



Christie's, New York

Great Operatic Arias

Sir Thomas Allen is well on the way to becoming a national treasure, if Alan Bennett hasn't already taken out copyright on that term. He is a baritone admired and loved in equal measure. He is admired for the beauty of his voice, for the – one is tempted to say unique, certainly as regards legato – quality of his musicianship, and for the insight-via-music he brings to everything he does whether on stage or in the concert hall. And he is loved for his generosity of spirit (not, perhaps, a quality always associated with opera singers), his sunny, down-to-earth nature, his wicked sense of humour and his sheer professionalism.

Over a long, happily still burgeoning, career he has carved benchmarks on certain operatic roles. He was for long the *Don Giovanni* of the day, world-wide, in collaboration with such great directors as Peter Hall and Giorgio Strehler. Has there been a funnier, more rueful Papageno, a more charmingly fatuous yet dangerous Count in *Figaro*, a more manipulative Don Alfonso? That's just Mozart. One of the most striking things about him is his versatility, a versatility happily reflected in this recital disc: he sings everything from

Monteverdi to Sondheim, via Verdi (a memorable Germont), Wagner (for me the Beckmesser), Puccini (an ebullient Marcello, an embarrassed Sharpless). That is not to mention Pelléas, Onegin, Billy Budd, and the Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, all of them amongst his great roles. And there was one unforgettable outing as Busoni's Doktor Faust. Should he ever consider giving up singing – heaven forbid – he could walk across the Thames and find work at the National Theatre: his skill as an actor has always been central to his success.

And then there's the words. This disc is in English, but whatever language he sings, whether Russian, French or Moravian, words are an indissoluble component in the musical line. He sings Italian recitative more fluently, more meaningfully than almost anyone, which is not surprising given that he chose to sit at the feet of Sesto Bruscantini. He writes books, he has just directed his first opera, *Albert Herring*, and directed it extremely well. The man is indecently gifted. Enough, let what follows speak for itself.

'Even bravest heart may swell' (track 1)

was a late addition to the text of *Faust* as we know it today. Gounod was delighted that the great English baritone Charles Santley had agreed to sing Valentin in the first British performance of his opera, and recognised that he should be rewarded with a solo aria – Valentin has none in the original. So the glorious tune from the prelude was given words by the opera's translator, the critic Henry Chorley; it was then back-translated into French for performances in France ('Avant de quitter ces lieux'). About to leave for the wars, Valentin entrusts his beloved sister Marguerite to God's care. The aria replaces a duet for the two of them that the original Marguerite, Marie Miöhlán, declined to sing, preferring to make her first entrance later in the act. We may have more regard for composer's wishes nowadays, but there is no chance of baritones surrendering what has become a staple of the operatic and concert repertoire in the interests of authenticity.

Figaro's entrance aria from *The Barber of Seville* (track 2) must be one of the most famous of all virtuoso showpieces for baritone: even people who have never set foot in an opera house recognise it. It is also one of the most technically demanding, requiring agility, untold reserves of breath control, and ability

to project words at high speed. It also tells you about the character: for all the pleasure of being so much in demand as a barber–surgeon, the way the pace relaxes and Figaro relishes the words tells you that it is his 'introduction service' that satisfies him most. A pimp, in other words.

Mozart's furious aria for Count Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* (track 3) is triggered by an overheard remark, Susanna's 'You've won the case already' to her betrothed. The case that the Count is about to hear concerns Figaro's outstanding debt to Marcellina, a debt that if it is not repaid will force him to marry the no-longer-young housekeeper. This would delight the Count, who lusts after Susanna himself. So jealousy plays its part in the aria, as well as the challenge to his seigneurial authority. Mozart rewrote the second part of the aria for the first performances in Vienna in 1789, a version only recently rediscovered and one that takes the baritone almost into the tenor register. This, the version sung here, holds no terrors for Sir Thomas.

Amongst much else, there is an eternal triangle at the centre of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*: Wolfram loves Elisabeth as much as does Tannhäuser, but realises early in the second act that his suit is hopeless. Hence the chaste

purity of his vision, a purity much mocked by his more worldly friend, when he is asked to describe the nature of love in the singing competition ('Turning my gaze', track [8]). In the third act Wolfram understands that Elisabeth hopes to win redemption for Tannhäuser through her own death, and he prays to the evening star (With dark foreboding', track [4]) to guide her soul to eternal light. The fact that the evening star is also Venus is one of the many mysteries in Wagner's troublesome masterpiece.

There is also an element of chaste purity in Prince Yeletsky's aria from **The Queen of Spades** (track [5]). Sensing that something is troubling Lisa, the girl to whom he has just become engaged, he sings of his dog-like devotion to her, of the undemanding nature of his love. Sadly, the feelings drawn in Tchaikovsky's long legato lines are misdirected. The last thing this highly-strung young woman wants is passive emotion: she is already in thrall to the fascinatingly daemonic Herman and is soon to be driven by him to her death.

Ambroise Thomas's **Hamlet** is a far better opera than its reputation would allow. Apart from anything else, all baritones worth their salt queue up to sing the title role, and it was

indeed one Sir Thomas's earliest and greatest successes. The (at first sight) surprisingly hearty drinking song (track [6]), or 'Chanson Bacchique', comes as prelude to the Players Scene, and shows Hamlet psyching himself and the actors up for the drama with which he hopes to 'catch the conscience of the king'. In its unbridled frenzy and the introspective middle section it also suggests the madness forever threatening the man's equilibrium.

Father-daughter relationships are a recurrent motif, almost an *idée-fixe*, in the operas of Verdi, and none is more affecting than the one in **Luisa Miller**, based on Schiller's 'bourgeois tragedy' *Kabale und Liebe*. Miller, a retired soldier and a widower, is fiercely protective of Luisa, his only child, and tolerant of her betrothal to a stranger in the village. In this scene from the first act the villainous and aptly-named Wurm reminds him that he once promised him her hand in marriage, but that she refused; as a father Miller could force her. This prompts the first part of Miller's aria (track [7]): marriage is sacred and a father is like God, kind and never harsh. Wurm then reveals that the stranger is in fact Rodolfo, son of Count Walter, his lord and master. Miller explodes in fury at this deception, his anger mingled with a further

outpouring of love for his child. As the action unfolds this mutual love leads to Luisa's renunciation of Rodolfo and to her death.

At the centre of Bizet's **Pearl Fishers** there is another eternal triangle. Nadir and Zurga, friends since childhood, both fell in love with the priestess Leila. Rather than imperil their friendship, they swore to renounce her and never seek to see her again. Zurga has meanwhile been elected chief of the fishing village, and the heavily veiled priestess hired to bless their endeavours is, astonishingly, Leila. It emerges that she and Nadir have been meeting secretly for some time, and when they do so again they are caught. In jealous fury, and at the height of a tropical storm, Zurga condemns them both to death. In his solo scene 'The storm has died away' (track [9]) he gives way to remorse over the rage that made him order their deaths, thinks it inconceivable that Nadir could have broken his word, and regrets the jealousy that led him to condemn Leila as well. The librettists Carré and Cormon said that if they had known what a great composer Bizet was they would not have saddled him with this 'ours infâme', this 'clumsy bear' of a libretto. Here is one of the many instances in which Bizet's genius easily transcends their efforts.

Britten's **Billy Budd** is another of Sir Thomas's great roles. Few have matched the wholesomeness, the lack of affectation, the simplicity of his impersonation of a character that can turn sickly or even sentimental. Simple virtue is the hardest quality of all to portray on stage. And few have sung the role with such insight, such scrupulous musicianship. The protagonist's final solo, 'Billy in the Darbies', (track [10]), finds him chained below decks awaiting his execution. He calmly accepts his death for a crime – striking and accidentally killing a superior officer – of which he, and the crew, not to mention every member of the audience, knows him to be innocent. So does Captain Vere, who for motives nigh-impossible to fathom, certainly in terms of 1951, decides to play by the book. Opera is full of scenes in which characters prepare to face death. There are precious few that approach the dramatic and human truth of this one.

From the sublime to the – well, hugely entertaining. Sir Thomas has long been a friend of the lighter muse, not least in his singing of folk and popular songs. He has sung both Strauss's Eisenstein and Lehár's Count Danilo on stage, and sung them memorably. The lightest of music repays

artistry of this stature. The 'Watch Duet' from **Die Fledermaus** (*The Bat*, track [11]) is one of operetta's most delirious moments. Randy husband lays siege to a masked beauty who is, inevitably, his wife Rosalinde. He brings into play his repeating watch, a fail-safe prop in earlier seductions, but for once it fails and Rosalinde pockets it, or rather conceals it in her cleavage. It will be a prop of quite another kind in Eisenstein's unmasking in the last act, and it is a close-run thing that Rosalinde's adulterous intentions are not unmasked as well via that other prop, Eisenstein's dressing gown. *Die Fledermaus*, as well as being one of the greatest of operatic comedies, is about pretty mucky people. By contrast, Danilo and Hanna in **The Merry Widow** are models of romantic virtue: they have been in love since long before the curtain rises, and the action is concerned with tricking, or forcing him into admitting the fact. The 'Cavalryman Duet', (track [12]), is one of many musical skirmishes between the pair of them, a skirmish in which he has got his military manoeuvres all wrong.

And Broadway musicals as well. **Carousel**'s Billy Bigelow is, sadly, a role that Sir Thomas has not done on stage (there was talk of it some years ago) though he has recorded substantial extracts, and here is another. Billy's

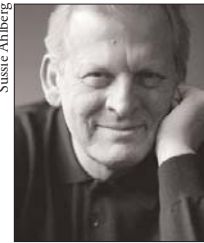
'Soliloquy' (track [13]) comes just after he has heard that his wife Julie is pregnant, and he imagines what his son will be like: for the most part a chip off the old block. Then, moment of horror, what if it's a girl? 'Heartbroken' says the stage direction. But horror gives way to a vision of near-Verdian love and protectiveness. Of course it is a girl, and the scene between her and the revenant Billy is one of the most affecting in the annals of Broadway.

Korngold's dreamlike, 'divinely decadent' **Die tote Stadt** was one of the most successful new operas of its day (1920) and is now enjoying something of a revival. Paul, the protagonist, has turned his house in Bruges, the dead city of the title, into a shrine in memory of his late wife, Marie. He encounters a singer, Marietta, who is the spitting image of her and in the second act watches her and her thespian friends entertaining themselves by a canal. The Pierrot character is asked for a song, and sings 'In visions, illusions', (track [14]), one of Korngold's most seductive melodies. At first it seems like a mere divertissement in the main, morbid plot, but since it is about the charm, and the danger, of living in the past, it can be seen as central to the opera's action. Either way, it is a

wonderfully nostalgic tune, with off-stage sopranos anticipating the composer's subsequent career in Hollywood.

© 2005 Rodney Milnes

Susie Ahlberg



Born in Seaham, County Durham, **Sir Thomas Allen** made his professional debut with Welsh National Opera and is now an established star of the great opera houses of the world.

At the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where in 2001 he celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of his debut with the company, he has sung over forty roles. In 2001, he also celebrated the twentieth anniversary of his debut at the Metropolitan Opera, New York. He is an acclaimed artist of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera and Los Angeles Opera; the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich and La Scala, Milan, as well as both the Salzburg and Glyndebourne Festivals.

He has been particularly acclaimed for his Billy Budd, Pelléas, Eugene Onegin, Ulisse and Beckmesser, as well as the great Mozart

roles of Count Almaviva, Don Alfonso, Papageno, Guglielmo and, of course, Don Giovanni. His recent engagements have included Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Don Alfonso, Ulisse and Don Giovanni at the Bayerische Staatsoper; Yeletsky (*Pique Dame*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) and the title role in *Sweeney Todd* at the Royal Opera House; Eisenstein at the Glyndebourne Festival; Don Alfonso at the Salzburg Easter and Summer Festivals; Forester (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) at the San Francisco Opera; and Beckmesser at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Equally renowned on the concert platform, he appears in recital in the United Kingdom, throughout Europe, in Australia and America, and has appeared with the world's great orchestras and conductors. The larger part of his repertoire has been extensively recorded with such distinguished names as Georg Solti, James Levine, Neville Marriner, Bernard Haitink, Sir Simon Rattle, Wolfgang Sawallisch and Riccardo Muti.

Thomas Allen's first book, *Foreign Parts – A Singer's Journal* was published in 1993 and he recently made a triumphant directing debut with *Albert Herring* at the Royal College of Music. His many honours include the title of Bayerischer Kammersänger awarded by the

Bayerische Staatsoper, Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music, Prince Consort Professor of the Royal College of Music, the Hambro Visiting Professorship of Opera Studies at Oxford University, Fellowship of Jesus College Oxford, Fellowship of the Royal College of Music, Fellowship of the University of Sunderland, M.A. from Newcastle University and D.Mus. from Durham University. In the New Year's Honours of 1989 he was created a Commander of the British Empire and in the 1999 Queen's Birthday Honours he was made a Knight Bachelor.

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 more than thirty 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 Flying Dutchman*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *A Masked Ball*, *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 Undergraduate 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 a 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.

Sir Thomas Allen in the title
role of The Royal Opera's
production of Tchaikovsky's
Eugene Onegin



Clive Barba

Winnie Klotz/The Metropolitan Opera, NY



Sir Thomas Allen
as Eisenstein, with
Barbara Daniels
as Rosalinde, in
The Metropolitan
Opera's production
of Johann Strauss's
Die Fledermaus

Große Opernarien

Sir Thomas Allen ist auf dem besten Wege dahin, zu einem nationalen Kleinod in England erklärt zu werden. Er wird als Bariton gleichermaßen bewundert und liebevoll verehrt. Bewunderung findet er mit der Schönheit seiner Stimme, mit seiner – man möchte, gewiss im Hinblick auf sein Legato, fast sagen: einzigartigen – Musikalität und mit seinem durch die Musik entwickelten Einfühlungsvermögen, das alle seine Bühnen- und Konzertauftritte prägt. Geliebt wird er für seine Großzügigkeit (vielleicht nicht immer ein Charakterzug, den man mit Opernsängern verbinden würde), sein heiteres, nüchternes Wesen, seinen beißenden Humor und seinen puren Professionalismus.

Im Laufe seiner langen, seligerweise immer noch blühenden Karriere hat er Meilensteine mit einigen Rollen gesetzt. Lange galt er weltweit als der *Don Giovanni* seiner Zeit, in Zusammenarbeit mit solch berühmten Regisseuren wie Peter Hall und Giorgio Strehler. Hat es je einen komischen, reuigeren Papageno gegeben, einen charmanter törichteren und doch gefährlichen Almaviva, einen manipulativeren Don Alfonso? Um nur

mit Mozart zu beginnen. Eines seiner markantesten Merkmale ist seine Vielseitigkeit, die auf dieser CD fabelhaft zum Ausdruck kommt: Er singt alles – von Monteverdi bis Sondheim, über Verdi (unvergesslich als Germont), Wagner (für meine Begriffe der Beckmesser schlechthin), Puccini (ein ausgelassener Marcello, ein verlegener Sharpless). Ganz zu schweigen von Pelléas, Onegin, Billy Budd und dem Förster in *Das schlaue Fuchslein*, die allesamt zu seinen großen Rollen zählen. Unvergesslich war er bei einer Gelegenheit auch als Busonis Doktor Faust. Sollte er jemals – Gott bewahre! – das Singen aufgeben wollen, könnte er am anderen Themse-Ufer eine neue Heimat im National Theatre finden, denn sein schauspielerisches Können ist von je her ein Kernelement seines Erfolgs gewesen.

Den Text dürfen wir nämlich nicht vergessen. Die Arien auf dieser CD singt er in englischer Sprache, aber es könnten auch russische, französische oder tschechische Zeilen sein – Wort und Musik sind bei ihm untrennbar miteinander verbunden. Er singt italienische Rezitative so flüssig und mitteil-

wie kaum ein anderer, was vielleicht nicht überrascht, wenn man sich daran erinnert, dass er bei Sesto Bruscantini studierte. Er schreibt Bücher und hat gerade ungemein überzeugend mit *Albert Herring* als Regisseur debütiert. Der Mann ist unverschämt begabt. Aber damit genug. Lassen wir das Folgende für sich sprechen.

“Even bravest heart may swell” (Band [1]) war eine späte Ergänzung zum Text der Oper *Faust*, wie wir sie heute kennen. Gounod war so erfreut darüber, dass der berühmte englische Bariton Charles Santley in der britischen Erstaufführung die Rolle des Valentin singen wollte, dass er sich mit einer Soloarie bedankte – in der Originalversion ist Valentin kein Solo besetzt. Der herrlichen Melodie aus dem Vorspiel gab deshalb der Übersetzer des Librettos, der Kritiker Henry Chorley, einen Text, der dann für spätere Aufführungen in Frankreich rückübersetzt wurde (“Avant de quitter ces lieux”). Valentin steht im Begriff, in den Krieg zu ziehen, und vertraut seine geliebte Schwester Marguerite der Obhut Gottes an. Die Arie tritt an die Stelle eines Duets, das die erste Marguerite, Marie Mihan, nicht singen mochte; sie zog es vor, die Bühne später zu betreten. Heutzutage respektieren wir vielleicht die Wünsche eines

Komponisten eher, aber es ist unvorstellbar, dass ein Bariton diese Arie, die inzwischen zum Grundstock des Opern- und Konzertrepertoires gehört, im Interesse der Authentizität wieder aufgeben würde.

Figaros Einstandsarie aus *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Band [2]) gehört zu den berühmtesten aller Glanzarien für Bariton: Selbst wer noch nie Fuß in ein Opernhaus gesetzt hat, kennt diese Nummer. Sie stellt auch höchste technische Anforderungen an den Sänger: Beweglichkeit, unerhörte Atemkontrolle und die Fähigkeit, mit höchster Geschwindigkeit zu artikulieren. Überdies offenbart sie den Charakter der Figur, denn bei aller Genugtuung darüber, als Barbier von Kunden umringt zu sein, erfahren wir aus dem Maß der Entspannung und dem auskostenden Ton Figaros, dass ihm seine “ersten Dienste” die größte Freude bereiten. Mit anderen Worten: Er ist ein Zuhälter.

Der Auslöser für die furiose Arie des Grafen Almaviva in Mozarts *Le nozze di Figaro* (Band [3]) ist eine von ihm überhörte Bemerkung Susannas, die ihrem Verlobten mitteilt, er habe den Fall bereits gewonnen. Besagter Fall ist eine offene Schuld Figaros gegenüber Marcellina; sollte er sie nicht begleichen, hat er die nicht mehr ganz so

junge Haushälterin zu ehelichen. Das wäre dem Grafen, der selbst ein Auge auf Susanna geworfen hat, sehr lieb. Eifersucht spielt also eine wichtige Rolle in dieser Arie, ebenso wie der Angriff auf seine gräfliche Autorität. Mozart nahm im zweiten Teil der Arie für die Uraufführungsserie in Wien 1789 noch einmal Änderungen vor; diese erst kürzlich wiederentdeckte Version hebt die Baritonlinie fast auf Tenorebene an. Solche Schwierigkeiten können Sir Thomas nicht abschrecken.

Neben vielem anderen dreht sich Wagners **Tannhäuser** um ein Dreiecksverhältnis: Wolfram ist ebenso wie Tannhäuser leidenschaftlich in Elisabeth verliebt, erkennt jedoch im zweiten Akt die Aussichtslosigkeit seines Werbens. So erklärt sich seine keusche Vorstellung von der reinen Liebe, die sein weltgewandter Freund mit viel Spott überhäuft, als dieser im Sängerkrieg das Wesen der Liebe beschreiben soll ("Turning my gaze", (Band [8])). Im dritten Akt begreift Wolfram, dass Elisabeth hofft, Tannhäuser durch ihren eigenen Tod zu erlösen, und er fleht den Abendstern an ("With dark foreboding", (Band [9])), ihre Seele zum ewigen Licht zu geleiten. Dass der Abendstern auch Venus ist, gehört zu den vielen rätselhaften Umständen in Wagners problematischem Meisterwerk.

Ein Element keuscher Reinheit tritt auch in der Arie des Fürsten Jeletzki aus **Pique Dame** (Band [5]) auf. Lisa, seine frischgebackene Verlobte, ist offenkundig bedrückt, und so besingt er seine bedingungslose Verehrung für sie, die Anspruchslosigkeit seiner Liebe. Leider sind die in den langen Legato-Phrasen Tschaikowskis zum Ausdruck kommenden Gefühle fehl am Platz. Passive Emotionen sind das letzte, was diese nervöse junge Frau braucht: Sie ist bereits dem faszinierend dämonischen Hermann verfallen, der sie bald in den Tod treiben wird.

Die Shakespeare-Vertonung **Hamlet** von Ambroise Thomas ist besser als ihr Ruf. Wer als Bariton etwas auf sich hält, reißt sich um die Titelrolle, und sie war auch einer der ersten und größten Erfolge von Sir Thomas. Das zunächst überraschend herzlich scheinende Trinklied (Band [6]) oder "Chanson Bacchique" kommt als Vorspiel zur Schauspielerszene und stellt dar, wie Hamlet sich und die anderen Akteure auf das bevorstehende Drama vorbereitet, mit dem er hofft, das Gewissen des Königs zu wecken. Mit seiner fieberhaften Raserei und dem introvertierten Mittelabschnitt lässt es auch den Wahnsinn erkennen, der das seelische Gleichgewicht des Mannes bedroht.

Vater-Tochter-Beziehungen sind ein ständig wiederkehrendes Motiv, fast eine fixe Idee, in den Opern Verdis, und nirgendwo ist es ergreifender ausgearbeitet als in **Luisa Miller**, nach Schillers bürgerlichem Trauerspiel *Kabale und Liebe*. Miller, ein verwitweter Soldat im Ruhestand, hängt an Luisa, seinem einzigen Kind, duldet aber ihre Verlobung mit einem Dorffremden. In dieser Szene aus dem ersten Akt wird er von dem schurkischen, trefflich benannten Wurm daran erinnert, dass ihm selber ihre Hand versprochen worden sei, sie aber abgelehnt habe; als Vater könne Miller ihre Einwilligung erzwingen. Darauf erwidert Miller im ersten Teil seiner Arie (Band [7]): Die Ehe ist heilig, und ein Vater ist wie Gott, gnädig und nie streng. Wurm verrät nun, dass der Fremde kein anderer ist als Rodolfo, Sohn des Conte di Walter. Miller ist angesichts dieser Täuschung außer sich, und sein Zorn verbindet sich mit neuerlichen Bekundungen seiner väterlichen Zuneigung. Diese enge Bindung führt letztlich dazu, dass Luisa von Wurm zum Verzicht auf Rodolfo genötigt und in den Tod getrieben wird.

Ein Dreiecksverhältnis steht auch im Mittelpunkt von Bizets **Les Pêcheurs de perles**. Die Jugendfreunde Nadir und Zurga sind beide in Leila verliebt. Um ihre

Freundschaft nicht zu gefährden, haben sie sich gegenseitig geschworen, nie mehr um das Mädchen zu werben. Zurga ist inzwischen Vorsteher seines Fischerdorfes, und um für die Perlenfischer zu beten, erscheint eine verschleierte Priesterin, die sich als Leila erweist. Bereits seit geraumer Zeit hat sie sich mit Nadir insgeheim getroffen, und nun werden sie beiner weiteren Gelegenheit überrascht. In eiferstüchtigem Zorn, auf der Höhe eines Tropensturms, verurteilt Zurga die beiden zum Tode. In der Soloarie "The storm has died away" (Band [9]) ist seine Wut gewichen; er kann sich nicht vorstellen, dass Nadir sein Wort gebrochen haben sollte, und er bereut die Eifersucht, in der er auch Leila verurteilt hat. Die Librettisten Carré und Cormon werden mit der Bemerkung zitiert, dass sie – wenn sie gewusst hätten, was für ein großartiger Komponist Bizet war – ihm nie diesen "ours infâme", diesen "klobigen Bär" von einem Libretto aufgehalst hätten. Hier haben wir einen der Augenblicke, in denen das Genie Bizets die Vorlage mühelos überwindet.

Brittens **Billy Budd** ist eine weitere Glanzrolle von Sir Thomas. Wenige haben seine Glaubhaftigkeit erreicht, den Mangel an Verstellung, die Schlichtheit seines Charakterporträts, das leicht in Rührseligkeit

oder gar Schmalz ausarten könnte. Einfache Tugend gehört zu den Eigenschaften, die auf der Bühne am schwersten zu vermitteln sind, und wenige haben die Rolle mit solchem Einfühlungsvermögen, solcher kompromisslosen Musikalität interpretiert. Der Titelheld singt sein letztes Solo, "Billy in the Darbies" (Band [10]), in Ketten geschlagen unter Deck, wo er seiner Hinrichtung harret. Mit Fassung akzeptiert er die Todesstrafe für ein Verbrechen – Angriff mit Totschlag auf einen Offizier – dessen er, wie er selbst, die Besatzung und alle Zuschauer im Publikum wissen, unschuldig ist. Auch Captain Vere weiß es, doch er beschließt aus Gründen, die sicherlich im Rahmen des Entstehungsjahres 1951 kaum fassbar sind, nach dem Buchstaben des Gesetzes vorzugehen. Die Welt der Oper ist reich an Szenen der Todesvorbereitung. Kaum eine kommt der dramatischen und menschlichen Wahrheit so nahe wie diese.

Von der Erhabenheit zur Unterhaltung. Sir Thomas ist seit langem als Freund der leichten Muse bekannt, nicht zuletzt durch seine Volkslieder und Populärmusik. Sein Eisenstein und sein Graf Danilo waren denkwürdige Bühnenergebnisse. Auch die leichteste Musik kommt durch hohe Kunstfertigkeit zu

schönster Blüte. Das "Uhrenduett" aus **Die Fledermaus** (Band [11]) gehört zu den glücklichsten Momenten der Operette. Ein abenteuerlustiger Gatte belagert eine maskierte Schönheit, bei der es sich – wie kann es anders sein – um seine eigene Ehefrau Rosalinde handelt. Er bringt seine Taschenuhr ins Spiel, ein bewährte Requisite aus früheren Eroberungen, aber diesmal versagt die Taktik, und Rosalinde bringt die Uhr an sich, besser gesagt: Sie lässt sie in ihrem Dekolleté verschwinden. Eine Requisite ganz anderer Art spielt eine wichtige Rolle bei der Demaskierung Eisensteins im letzten Akt: sein Schlafrock, und Rosalindes ehebrecherische Absichten hätten dabei sehr wohl ebenfalls enthüllt werden können. *Die Fledermaus* ist nicht nur eine der größten Operettenkomödien, sondern auch ein schlüpfriges Sujet. Danilo und Hanna sind demgegenüber in **Die lustige Witwe** Muster an romantischer Tugend: Sie waren schon ineinander verliebt, lange bevor der Vorhang sich hebt, und nun dreht sich alles darum, wie man sie dazu bringen kann, dies auch einzugestehen. Das "Reitersmannduett" (Band [12]) ist eines von vielen musikalischen Geplänkeln zwischen den beiden, bei dem ihm alle militärischen Operationen misslingen.

Broadway-Musicals nicht zu vergessen. Leider hat Sir Thomas nie Billy Bigelow in einer Bühnenszenierung von **Carousel** verkörpert (obwohl vor einigen Jahren davon die Rede war), doch hat er größere Auszüge auf Schallplatte aufgenommen, wie beispielsweise diese Nummer. Billy singt sein "Soliloquy" (Band [13]), nachdem er erfahren hat, dass seine Frau Julie ihm ein Kind bescheren wird, und er malt sich aus, dass der Stammhalter ganz wie der Vater ausfallen wird. Doch dann kommt ein ernüchternder Gedanke: Und wenn es ein Mädchen ist? "Todunglücklich" heißt es in den Regieanweisungen. Das erste Grausen weicht einer Vorstellung von nahezu verdischer Liebe und Beschütznatur. Natürlich bekommt er eine Tochter, und die Szene zwischen ihr und dem heimkehrenden Billy gehört zu den ergreifendsten Momenten in der Geschichte des Broadway.

Korngolds traumhafte, "göttlich dekadente" Oper **Die tote Stadt** war eines der großen Erfolgswerke ihrer Zeit (1920) und gewinnt mittlerweile wieder etwas von ihrem Status zurück. Der Protagonist Paul hat sein Haus in Brügge, der besagten toten Stadt, in einen Schrein zum Gedenken an seine verstorbene Frau Marie verwandelt. Er begegnet der

Sängerin Marietta, die Marie täuschend ähnlich sieht, und im zweiten Akt beobachtet er, wie sie und ihre Komödiantentruppe an einem Kai tafeln. Der Pierrot wird um ein Lied gebeten und singt "In visions, illusions" (Band [14]), eine der verführerischsten Melodien Korngolds. Zunächst scheint dies nur eine Ablenkung von der morbiden Haupthandlung zu sein, doch da es hier um den Reiz und die Gefahren der Gegenwartsverdrängung geht, hat das Lied eigentlich zentrale Bedeutung. So oder so ist es eine wunderbar nostalgische Melodie, und die Sopranstimmen hinter den Kulissen sind Vorboten der späteren Hollywood-Karriere des Komponisten.

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Übersetzung: Andreas Klatt

Sir Thomas Allen wurde in Seaham (County Durham) geboren und gab sein Debüt als Berufssänger an der Welsh National Opera. Heute ist er an allen großen Opernhäusern der Welt etabliert. Alleine an der Royal Opera Covent Garden, wo er 2001 sein dreißigjähriges Jubiläum feierte, hat er mehr als vierzig Rollen verkörpert. 2001 beging er auch sein zwanzigjähriges Jubiläum an der

Metropolitan Opera New York. Von der Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera und Los Angeles Opera, der Bayerischen Staatsoper und der Mailänder Scala, den Salzburger Festspielen und dem Glyndebourne Festival ist er nicht fortzudenken.

Besonders berühmt ist er für Leibrollen wie Billy Budd, Pelléas, Eugen Onegin, Ulisse und Beckmesser sowie die großen Mozart-Partien des Grafen Almaviva, Don Alfonso, Papageno, Guglielmo und natürlich Don Giovanni. Unlängst war er u.a. Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Don Alfonso, Ulisse und Don Giovanni an der Bayerischen Staatsoper, Jeletski (*Pique Dame*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) und *Sweeney Todd* an der Royal Opera Covent Garden, Eisenstein beim Glyndebourne Festival, Don Alfonso bei den Salzburger Oster- und Sommerfestspielen, Förster (*Das schlaue Fuchslein*) an der San Francisco Opera und Beckmesser an der Metropolitan Opera New York.

Als ebenso berühmter Konzertkünstler tritt er regelmäßig in ganz Europa, Australien und Amerika auf, gemeinsam mit den großen Orchestern und Dirigenten der Welt. Den größten Teil seines Repertoires hat er mit Spitzendirektoren wie Georg Solti, James Levine, Neville Marriner, Bernard Haitink,

Sir Simon Rattle, Wolfgang Sawallisch und Riccardo Muti auf Schallplatte aufgenommen.

Thomas Allens erstes Buch, *Foreign Parts – A Singer's Journal*, wurde 1993 veröffentlicht, und mit *Albert Herring* hat er am Royal College of Music einen triumphalen Einstand als Regisseur gefeiert. Neben vielen anderen Ehrungen trägt er den Titel eines Bayerischen Kammersängers, er ist Ehrenmitglied der Royal Academy of Music, Prince Consort Professor am Royal College of Music, Hambro Gastprofessor für Opernstudien an der Universität Oxford, Fellow am Jesus College Oxford, am Royal College of Music und an der Universität Sunderland, Ehrenmagister der Universität Newcastle und Ehrendoktor der Universität Durham. 1989 erhielt er den britischen Verdienstorden CBE, und 1999 wurde er von Königin Elizabeth II. in den Adelsstand erhoben.

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 Operaufführungen, 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.

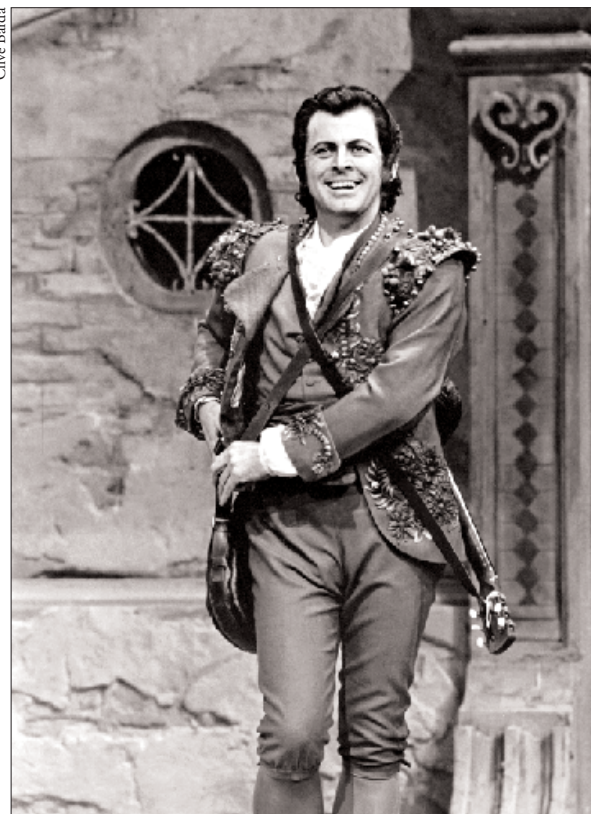
Er ist häufig in Spanien zu Gast und hat mit den meisten bedeutenden spanischen

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 Flying Dutchman*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *A Masked Ball*, *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.

Clive Bara



Sir Thomas Allen as Figaro in The Royal Opera's production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*

Grands airs d'opéra

Sir Thomas Allen pourrait bien devenir un trésor national en Angleterre. En effet, ce baryton est admiré et aimé à part égale. Il est admiré pour la beauté de sa voix, pour la qualité de sa technique – que l'on est tenté de qualifier d'unique, certainement en ce qui concerne le legato – et pour la compréhension musicale qu'il apporte à tout ce qu'il fait, que ce soit sur scène ou en concert. Et il est aimé pour sa générosité d'esprit (une qualité qui n'est peut-être pas toujours associée aux chanteurs d'opéra), pour son tempérament enjoué, les pieds sur terre, son humour malicieux et son professionnalisme absolu.

Tout au long d'une longue carrière heureusement toujours bourgeoissante, il a imposé sa marque à certains rôles d'opéra. Il fut pendant longtemps le *Don Giovanni* de l'époque, dans le monde entier, collaborant avec des metteurs en scène aussi grands que Peter Hall et Giorgio Strehler. A-t-on connu un Papageno plus drôle et plus chagrin, un Comte d'une stupidité plus charmante et pourtant dangereuse dans *Figaro*, un Don Alfonso plus manipulateur? Et c'est seulement si l'on s'en tient à Mozart. L'un des traits le

plus frappant de Thomas Allen est l'éclectisme, un éclectisme qui se révèle avec bonheur dans ce disque récital: il chante tout de Monteverdi à Sondheim, en passant par Verdi (un Germont mémorable), Wagner (pour moi le plus grand Beckmesser), Puccini (un Marcello exubérant, un Sharpless embarrassé). On peut encore ajouter Pelléas, Onéguine, Billy Budd et le Forestier dans *Le Petite Renarde rusée*, tous parmi ses grands rôles. Et on se rappellera une excursion inoubliable dans le rôle du Doktor Faust de Busoni. S'il songeait à abandonner le chant – surtout pas! – il pourrait traverser la Tamise et trouver du travail au National Theatre: son talent d'acteur a toujours été un élément central de son succès.

Et puis il y a les paroles. Ce disque est en anglais, mais quelle que soit la langue qu'il chante – russe, français ou morave – les paroles constituent un élément indissociable de la ligne musicale. Il chante les récitatifs italiens avec une aisance et une sincérité presque sans égales, ce qui ne surprendra quand on songe qu'il choisit de prendre Sesto Bruscantini pour modèle. Il écrit des livres, il vient juste de mettre en scène son premier

opéra, Albert Herring, et d'une manière tout à fait remarquable. L'homme est vraiment trop doué. Mais c'est assez, laissons ce qui suit parler pour soi-même.

"Even bravest heart may swell" (page 1) est une addition tardive au livret de *Faust* tel que nous le connaissons aujourd'hui. Gounod avait été enchanté que le grand baryton anglais Charles Santley accepte de chanter le rôle de Valentin pour la première britannique de son opéra, et estima qu'il méritait d'être récompensé par un air – Valentin n'en a pas dans la version originale. Ainsi, le critique Henry Chorley, traducteur du livret, ajouta des paroles à la magnifique mélodie du prélude; elles furent ensuite adaptées en français pour les représentations en France ("Avant de quitter ces lieux"). Sur le point de partir à la guerre, Valentin demande à Dieu de protéger Marguerite, sa sœur bien-aimée. L'air remplace un duo destiné à Valentin et Marguerite que la créatrice du rôle, Marie Mïohlan, refusa de chanter, préférant faire sa première entrée plus tard au cours de l'acte. On a peut-être davantage de respect aujourd'hui pour les intentions du compositeur, mais il est toutefois impensable que les barytons abandonnent ce qui est devenu l'un des morceaux de base du répertoire lyrique et de concert au profit de l'authenticité.

Le premier air de Figaro dans *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (page 2) est probablement l'un des morceaux de bravoure pour baryton les plus célèbres: même ceux qui n'ont jamais mis les pieds dans un théâtre lyrique le reconnaissent. C'est également l'un des plus difficiles sur le plan technique, exigeant une agilité parfaite, un contrôle du souffle exceptionnel, et la capacité de projeter les paroles dans un mouvement très rapide. Il nous renseigne également sur le personnage: malgré tout le succès que lui apporte son état de chirurgien-coiffeur, la manière dont le mouvement se détend et dont Figaro savoure les paroles nous informe que c'est son "agence de rencontres" qui lui donne le plus de satisfaction. Un proxénète en d'autres termes.

L'air furieux du Comte Almaviva dans *Le nozze di Figaro* (page 3) de Mozart est provoqué par la remarque de Susanna à son fiancé: "Tu as déjà gagné ton procès". Le procès en question concerne la forte dette que Figaro a envers la vieille gouvernante Marcellina, qu'il devra épouser s'il ne peut la rembourser. Ceci plairait beaucoup au Comte, car il court après Susanna. La jalousie joue donc son rôle dans ce morceau, ainsi que le défi lancé à son autorité seigneuriale. Mozart récrivit la seconde partie de l'air pour les

premières représentations à Vienne en 1789. Découverte seulement récemment, cette version porte presque la tessiture du baryton dans celle du ténor, une difficulté qui ne fait pas peur à Sir Thomas.

Parmi bien d'autres choses, il y a un triangle éternel au centre du *Tannhäuser* de Wagner: Wolfram et Tannhäuser aiment tous deux Elisabeth, mais au début du deuxième acte Wolfram prend conscience qu'il n'a aucune chance de la conquérir. D'où la pureté chaste de sa vision, une pureté dont se moque beaucoup son ami plus terre à terre quand il lui demande de décrire la nature de l'amour dans un concours de chant ("Turning my gaze" (page [8])). Au troisième acte, Wolfram comprend qu'Elisabeth espère obtenir la rédemption de Tannhäuser en se sacrifiant elle-même, et il prie l'étoile du soir ("With dark foreboding" (page [4])) de guider son âme vers la lumière éternelle. Le fait que l'étoile du soir soit également Vénus est l'un des nombreux mystères du chef-d'œuvre complexe de Wagner.

L'air du Prince Yeletsky extrait de *La Dame de Pique* (page [5]) possède également une certaine pureté chaste. Percevant que quelque chose inquiète Elisa, sa jeune fiancée, il chante sa dévotion absolue envers elle et la nature peu

exigeante de son amour. Malheureusement, les sentiments exprimés par les longues lignes *legato* de Tchaïkovski sont mal dirigés.

L'émotion passive est bien la dernière chose que désire cette jeune femme très nerveuse: elle est déjà sous l'emprise du démoniaque et fascinant Herman qui va bientôt la conduire à la mort.

Hamlet d'Ambroise Thomas est un opéra bien meilleur que ne le laisserait supposer sa réputation. Pour commencer, tous les barytons dignes de ce nom font la queue pour chanter le rôle titre, et ce fut en effet l'un des premiers et des plus grands succès de Sir Thomas. La chanson à boire étonnamment joviale (à première vue) (page [6]) ou "Chanson Bachique", sert de prélude à la Scène des Acteurs, et montre Hamlet et les acteurs en train de se préparer pour le drame avec lequel il espère "saisir la conscience du roi". La frénésie débridée et la section médiane introspective de la chanson suggèrent également la folie qui menace constamment l'équilibre mental du personnage.

Le rapport père-fille est un thème qui revient souvent, presque à la manière d'une idée fixe, dans les opéras de Verdi, et aucun n'est plus émouvant que celui présenté dans **Luisa Miller**, d'après le "drame bourgeois" de

Schiller, *Kabale und Liebe*. Miller, un soldat veuf et à la retraite, protège farouchement sa fille unique Luisa, et tolère qu'elle se fiance avec un étranger du village. Dans cette scène extraite du premier acte, l'infâme et bien nommé Worm rappelle à Miller qu'il lui a autrefois promis la main de sa fille, mais qu'elle a refusé; Miller pourrait faire usage de son autorité paternelle et la contraindre d'accepter. Ceci provoque la première partie de l'air de Miller (page [7]): le mariage est sacré, un père est comme Dieu, bon et jamais sévère. Wurm lui apprend alors que l'étranger est en fait Rodolfo, le fils du Comte Walter, son seigneur et maître. Miller éclate de colère en apprenant cette duperie, et sa rage se mêle à une nouvelle expression d'amour débordant pour sa fille. Au fur et à mesure que l'action se déroule, cet amour mutuel conduit Luisa à abandonner Rodolfo, puis à sa mort.

Il y a de nouveau un triangle éternel au centre des **Pêcheurs de perles** de Bizet. Nadir et Zurga, amis depuis l'enfance, tombent tous deux amoureux de la prêtresse Leila. Plutôt que de mettre en péril leur amitié, ils jurent de renoncer à elle et de ne jamais chercher à la revoir. Zurga a été entre temps élu chef du village des pêcheurs. Convoquée pour bénir leurs efforts, la prêtresse, dont le visage est

couvert d'un voile impénétrable, n'est autre que Leila. On apprend qu'elle rencontre secrètement Nadir depuis un certain temps, et ils finissent par se faire surprendre. Fou de jalousie, et au point culminant d'une tempête tropicale, Zurga les condamne tous deux à mort. Dans sa scène solo, "The Storm has died away" (page [9]), il est pris de remords d'avoir ordonné leur mort sous l'emprise de la colère; il pense qu'il est impossible que Nadir ait pu manquer à sa parole, et regrette la jalousie qui l'a conduit à le condamner ainsi que Leila. Les librettistes Carré et Cormon déclarèrent que s'ils avaient su que Bizet était un si grand compositeur, ils ne l'auraient pas encombré avec un livret aussi "infâme" et "maladroit". C'est ici l'un des nombreux exemples où le génie de Bizet transcende sans peine leurs efforts.

Billy Budd de Britten est l'un des grands rôles de Sir Thomas. Peu d'artistes ont égalé l'équilibre, l'absence d'affectation, la simplicité de son interprétation d'un personnage qui pourrait devenir mièvre, voire sentimental. La simplicité est la qualité la plus difficile à incarner sur scène, et peu de chanteurs ont interprété le rôle avec une telle compréhension et une musicalité aussi scrupuleuse. Billy est enchaîné dans les cales et attend son exécution

lors de son solo final, “Billy in the Darbies” (page [10]). Il accepte calmement sa mort pour un crime – il a frappé et tué accidentellement un officier – pour lequel, lui-même, l’équipage, sans parler de chacun des membres du public, sait qu’il est innocent. De même que le Capitaine Vere, qui pour des motifs presque impossibles à sonder, certainement si l’on se place dans le contexte de l’époque (1951), décide d’appliquer les règles. L’opéra est rempli de scènes où des personnages se préparent à mourir. Rares sont ceux qui approchent d’aussi près la vérité dramatique et humaine de *Billy Budd*.

Passons maintenant du sublime au comique débridé. Sir Thomas est depuis longtemps un ami de la muse légère, notamment quand il chante des chansons folkloriques et populaires. Sur scène, il a interprété de manière mémorable le rôle d’Eisenstein de Strauss et celui du Comte Danilo de Lehár. La musique la plus légère récompense un talent artistique d’une telle stature. Extrait de *Die Fledermaus* (page [11]), le “Duo de la Montre” est l’un des moments les plus drôles de l’ouvrage. Un mari libidineux fait la cour à une belle masquée qui, inévitablement, n’est autre que sa propre épouse Rosalinde. Il utilise le carillon de sa montre, un accessoire infaillible lors de ses

précédentes tentatives de séductions, mais pour une fois il échoue et Rosalinde l’empoche, ou plus précisément le glisse dans son corsage. C’est un accessoire d’un genre très différent qui servira à démasquer Eisenstein au dernier acte, et il s’en faut de peu que les intentions adultères de Rosalinde ne soient également trahies par cet autre accessoire, la robe de chambre d’Eisenstein. *Die Fledermaus* est l’une des plus grandes opérettes, mais traite de personnages plutôt douteux. En contraste, Danilo et Hanna dans *Die lustige Witwe* sont des modèles de vertu romantique: ils sont amoureux l’un de l’autre depuis bien avant la levée du rideau, et l’histoire traite de la manière dont il est amené ou poussé à admettre de fait. Le “Duo du Cavalier” (page [12]) est l’une des nombreuses escarmouches musicales entre les deux protagonistes, mais une escarmouche dans laquelle les manœuvres militaires de Danilo échouent complètement.

Et il y a aussi les comédies musicales de Broadway. Billy Bigelow dans *Carousel* est un rôle que Sir Thomas n’a malheureusement jamais chanté sur scène (il en avait été question il y a quelques années) bien qu’il en ait enregistré d’importants extraits, et en voici un autre. Billy chante son “Soliloque”

(page [13]) juste après avoir appris que sa femme Julie est enceinte, et il imagine ce que sera son fils, c’est-à-dire pour l’essentiel le reflet de son père. Puis, moment d’horreur, si c’était une fille? “Le cœur brisé” indique la direction scénique. Mais l’horreur cède la place à une vision d’amour et d’instinct de protection proche de Verdi. C’est bien entendu une fille, et la scène entre elle et le fantôme de Billy est l’une des plus émouvantes dans les annales de Broadway.

L’opéra rêveur et “divinement décadent” de Korngold, *Die tote Stadt*, fut l’un des nouveaux ouvrages lyriques les plus acclamés de son temps (1921), et il jouit actuellement d’un certain regain d’intérêt. Paul, le protagoniste, a transformé sa maison de Bruges, la ville morte du titre, en un sanctuaire à la mémoire de Marie, son épouse disparue. Il rencontre une chanteuse, Marietta, qui est le portrait tout craché de Marie, et au deuxième acte, il l’observe en train de s’amuser avec ses amis acteurs au bord d’un canal. On demande au personnage de Pierrot de chanter une chanson, “In visions, illusions” (page [14]), qui possède d’une des mélodies les plus séduisantes de Korngold. Elle semble être au premier abord un simple divertissement au sein d’une intrigue morbide, mais puisqu’elle

traite du charme et du danger de vivre dans le passé, il est possible de la considérer comme un élément central dans l’action de l’opéra. Quoi qu’il en soit, c’est une mélodie merveilleusement nostalgique, avec des sopranos dans les coulisses anticipant la future carrière du compositeur à Hollywood.

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Traduction: Francis Marchal

Né à Seaham dans le comté de Durham, **Sir Thomas Allen** fit ses débuts professionnels avec le Welsh National Opera, et est aujourd’hui une star des grandes salles lyriques du monde entier. Au Royal Opera de Covent Garden à Londres, où il a célébré en 2001 le trentième anniversaire de ses débuts avec cette compagnie, il a chanté plus de quarante rôles. En 2001, il a également célébré le vingtième anniversaire de ses débuts au Metropolitan Opera de New York. Il est acclamé au Lyric Opera de Chicago, à l’Opéra de San Francisco, à l’Opéra de Los Angeles, au Bayerische Staatsoper de Munich, à La Scala de Milan, ainsi qu’au Festival de Salzbourg et au Festival de Glyndebourne.

Il a été particulièrement acclamé pour ses interprétations des rôles de Billy Budd, Pelléas,

Eugène Onéguine, Ulysse et Beckmesser, pour les grands rôles mozartiens tels que le Comte Almaviva, Don Alfonso, Papageno, Guglielmo, et bien sûr Don Giovanni. Récemment, il a chanté Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Don Alfonso, Ulysse et Don Giovanni au Bayerische Staatsoper; Yeletsky (*La Dame de Pique*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) et le rôle titre de *Sweeney Todd* au Royal Opera de Covent Garden; Eisenstein au Festival de Glyndebourne; Don Alfonso au Festival de Pâques et au Festival estival de Salzbourg; le Fôrestier (*La Petite Renarde rusée*) à l'Opéra de San Francisco et Beckmesser au Metropolitan Opera de New York.

Également célèbre en concert, il se produit en récital en Grande-Bretagne, à travers l'Europe, en Australie, en Amérique, et a chanté avec les plus grands orchestres et chefs du monde entier. Il a enregistré la plus grande partie de son répertoire avec des chefs aussi éminents que Georg Solti, James Levine, Neville Marriner, Bernard Haitink, Simon Rattle, Wolfgang Sawallisch et Riccardo Muti.

Le premier livre de Thomas Allen, *Foreign Parts – A Singer's Journal*, a été publié en 1993, et il a récemment fait ses débuts triomphaux de metteur en scène avec *Albert Herring* au Royal College of Music de Londres. Ses

nombreux titres honorifiques incluent le Bayerischer Kammersänger décerné par le Bayerische Staatsoper, le "Honorary Membership" de la Royal Academy of Music de Londres, le "Prince Consort Professor" du Royal College of Music de Londres, le "Hambro Visiting Professorship of Opera Studies" de l'Université d'Oxford, le "Fellowship" du Royal College of Music de Londres et de l'Université de Sunderland, un M.A. de l'Université de Newcastle et un D.Mus de l'Université de Durham. Thomas Allen a été créé Commandeur de l'empire britannique (CBE) en 1989, et a été anobli en 1999.

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 1964.

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.

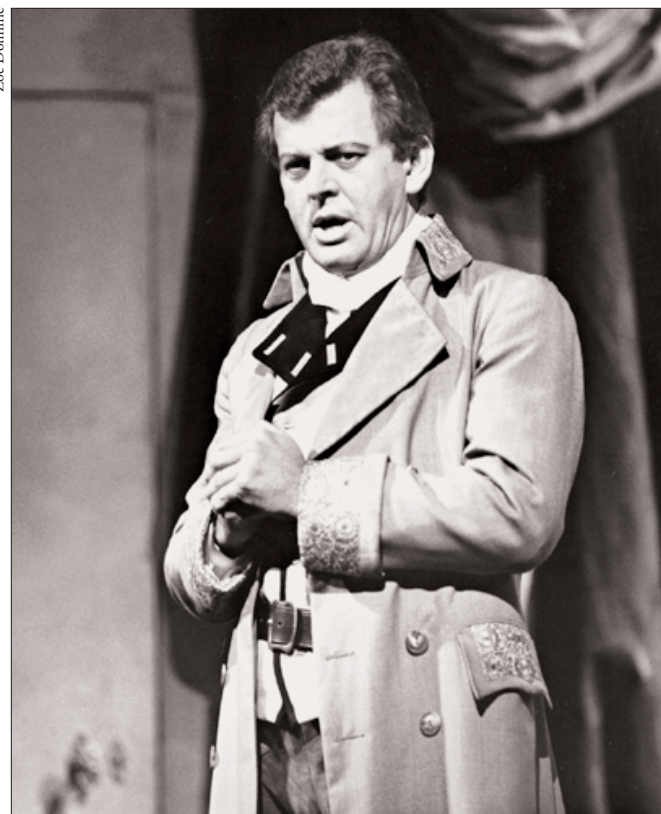
Il séjourne fréquemment en Espagne où il a dirigé en concert la plupart des grands orchestres espagnols. C'est lui qui dirigea la première espagnole de *Peter Grimes* à Madrid et en 1996 la première production espagnole de *The Rake's Progress*. Il a dirigé en Allemagne, en Suisse, aux Pays-Bas, au Festival 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 Flying Dutchman*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *A Masked Ball*, *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Ernani*, *Il trovatore*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *La bohème*, *Turandot*, l'enregistrement primé de *Tosca* et des extraits de *Der Rosenkavalier*, tous ces enregistrements étant réalisés en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation.

Zoe Dominic



Sir Thomas Allen as Count Almaviva in The Royal Opera's production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*

Grandi arie operistiche

Sir Thomas Allen ha raggiunto la fama dei nomi più illustri dell'ambiente culturale della sua patria, il Regno Unito. È un baritono ammirato e amato in egual misura. È ammirato per la bellezza della sua voce, per la sua sensibilità musicale – viene la tentazione di dire unica, senz'altro per quanto riguarda il legato – e per le sue attente interpretazioni teatrali e concertistiche. Ed è amato per il suo spirito generoso (una qualità non sempre associata ai cantanti lirici), per la sua natura allegra, pratica, per il suo grande senso dell'umorismo e per il suo professionismo.

Nel corso di una lunga carriera, per fortuna ancora in divenire, Thomas Allen ha segnato alcune pietre miliari. È stato il *Don Giovanni* del momento a livello mondiale, in collaborazione con grandi registi del calibro di Peter Hall e Giorgio Strehler. Non si sono mai visti un Papageno più divertente, più degno di compassione, un Conte più attraentemente fatuo ma pericoloso nelle *Nozze di Figaro*, né un Don Alfonso più manipolatore. E questo è solo Mozart. Una delle qualità più notevoli di questo artista è la sua versatilità, che si rispecchia fortunatamente in tutti i brani

registrati in questo disco che vanno da Monteverdi a Sondheim, passando per Verdi (con un memorabile Germont), Wagner (secondo me, Beckmesser), Puccini (un Marcello esuberante, uno Sharpless imbarazzato). Per non parlare di Pelléas, Onieghin, Billy Budd, e il Guardiacaccia nella *Volpe astuta*, tutti annoverati tra i suoi grandi ruoli. E c'è stata un'interpretazione indimenticabile nel ruolo del Doktor Faust di Busoni. Se gli dovesse mai venire la malaugurata idea di abbandonare il canto potrebbe attraversare il Tamigi e lavorare al National Theatre: il suo talento di attore è sempre stato determinante per il suo successo.

E poi ci sono le parole. Questo disco è in inglese, ma nelle sue interpretazioni in lingua russa, francese o morava, le parole sono una componente indissolubile della musica. I recitativi che esegue in italiano hanno un'incredibile spontaneità, cosa non sorprendente, data la sua scelta di studiare con Sesto Bruscantini. È autore di libri, ha diretto la sua prima opera, *Albert Herring*, con risultati ottimi. È un uomo straordinariamente

dotato. Ma adesso lasciamo che quanto segue parli da sé.

“Even bravest heart may swell” (traccia [1]) fu una tarda aggiunta al testo del *Faust* che conosciamo oggi. Felice del fatto che il grande baritono inglese Charles Santley avesse accettato di cantare Valentin nella prima rappresentazione britannica della sua opera, Gounod decise di premiarlo con un'aria solistica -- Valentin non ne ha nemmeno una nell'originale. Così il critico Henry Chorley, traduttore dell'opera, creò un testo per il meraviglioso motivo del preludio, che venne poi tradotto nuovamente in francese per le rappresentazioni in Francia (“Avant de quitter ces lieux”). Prima di partire per la guerra, Valentin affida l'amata sorella Marguerite alla cura di Dio. L'aria sostituisce un duetto dei due fratelli che la Marguerite originale, Marie Mïohlan, aveva rifiutato di cantare, preferendo fare il suo primo ingresso più tardi nello stesso atto. Oggi forse si terrebbe in maggiore considerazione il desiderio del compositore, ma era impossibile che i baritoni abbandonassero quella che è diventata materia prima del repertorio operistico e concertistico, nell'interesse dell'autenticità.

L'aria dell'ingresso di Figaro nel *Barbiere di Siviglia* (traccia [2]) è senz'altro uno dei più

famosi brani di virtuosismo per baritono: la conosce anche chi non ha mai messo piede in un teatro lirico. È anche una delle più difficili dal punto di vista tecnico e richiede agilità, incalcolabili riserve di controllo del respiro e capacità di proiettare parole ad alta velocità. È anche una spia della vera natura del personaggio: nonostante il piacere di essere richiestissimo come barbiere e dentista, il modo in cui il ritmo rallenta e Figaro assapora le parole rivela che è il “servizio di presentazione” a soddisfarlo maggiormente. Un mezzano, in altri termini.

L'irata aria mozartiana del conte di Almaviva nelle *Nozze di Figaro* (traccia [3]) viene scatenata da un'osservazione di Susanna al suo fidanzato, colta per caso: “hai già vinta la causa”. Si tratta del debito in sospeso tra Figaro e Marcellina che, se non ripagato, lo obbligherebbe a sposare la governante non più giovane. La cosa farebbe felice il Conte che ha le proprie mire sessuali su Susanna. Così la gelosia è un elemento scatenante della sua reazione, oltre alla sfida alla sua autorità di signore. La seconda parte dell'aria fu riscritta da Mozart per le prime rappresentazioni a Vienna nel 1789; la versione è stata riscoperta da poco e porta il baritono quasi nel registro

tenorile ma, in questo caso, non crea problemi per Thomas Allen.

Tra tante altre cose, esiste un eterno triangolo al centro del **Tannhäuser** di Wagner: Wolfram ama Elisabeth quanto Tannhäuser, ma si rende conto all'inizio del secondo atto che il suo corteggiamento è senza speranza. Da qui la casta purezza del suo ideale, una purezza molto schernita dal suo amico più pratico, quando gli viene chiesto di descrivere la natura dell'amore nella gara di canto ("Turning my gaze", (traccia [8])). Nel terzo atto Wolfram comprende che Elisabeth spera di ottenere la redenzione per Tannhäuser con la propria vita e invoca la stella della sera ("With dark foreboding", (traccia [4])) perché guidi la sua anima verso la luce eterna. Il fatto che la stella della sera sia anche Venere è uno dei tanti misteri di questo doloroso capolavoro di Wagner.

Esiste anche un elemento di casta purezza nell'aria del principe Eleckij tratta dalla **Dama di picche** (traccia [5]). Rendendosi conto del fatto che qualcosa preoccupa Liza, la fanciulla con cui si è appena fidanzato, l'uomo le descrive la propria devozione a lei come quella di un cagnolino: la natura del suo amore non è esigente. Purtroppo i sentimenti delineati nelle lunghe linee legate di Cajkovskij sono mal

riposti. L'ultima cosa che questa giovane donna estremamente sensibile desidera è un'emozione passiva: è già stata affascinata dal diabolico German che ben presto la porterà alla morte.

Hamlet di Ambroise Thomas è un'opera molto migliore di quanto faccia pensare la sua reputazione. Al di là di tutto il resto, i baritoni di un certo livello fanno la fila per cantare il ruolo di protagonista e infatti questo è stato uno dei primi e più grandi successi di sir Thomas. Il brindisi, sorprendentemente e apparentemente esuberante (traccia [9]), o "Chanson Bacchique" fa da preludio alla scena degli attori; Amleto analizza se stesso e gli attori del dramma che, si augura, "farà presa sulla coscienza del re". La sua sbrigliata esaltazione e la sezione introspettiva centrale suggeriscono la follia che minaccia costantemente il suo equilibrio.

I rapporti tra padre e figlia sono un motivo ricorrente, quasi un'idea fissa nelle opere di Verdi e nessuno è più commovente di quello della **Luisa Miller**, basato sulla "tragedia brorghese" *Kabale und Liebe* di Schiller. Miller, militare in pensione e vedovo, è molto protettivo nei confronti della figlia unica, Luisa, e ha accettato il suo fidanzamento con

uno straniero nel villaggio. In questa scena dal primo atto, il malvagio Wurm gli ricorda che una volta gli ha promesso la mano della figlia in matrimonio, ma che lei ha rifiutato; con la sua autorità di padre, Miller potrebbe obbligarla. Questo suggerisce la prima parte dell'aria di Miller (traccia [7]): il matrimonio è sacro e un padre somiglia a Dio, buono e mai duro. Poi Wurm rivela che lo straniero è in realtà Rodolfo, figlio del conte Walter, suo padrone e signore. Miller ha un'esplosione d'ira e la sua rabbia si mescola con un altro sfogo d'amore nei confronti della figlia. Con lo svolgimento della vicenda, l'amore per il padre a sua volta spingerà Luisa a rinunciare a Rodolfo e la porterà alla morte.

Al centro dei **Pescatori di perle** di Bizet si trova un altro eterno triangolo. Nadir e Zurga, amici d'infanzia, sono entrambi innamorati della sacerdotessa Leila. Per non mettere a repentaglio la loro amicizia, hanno giurato di rinunciare a lei e non rivederla più. Nel frattempo Zurga è stato eletto capo del suo villaggio di pescatori, che ha chiamato una sacerdotessa velata a benedire il suo lavoro. Ma la donna, sorprendentemente, è Leila, che da qualche tempo incontra Nadir in segreto. Quando la cosa si ripete i due vengono colti sul fatto. In preda all'ira e la gelosia e nel

momento culminante di una tempesta tropicale, Zurga li condanna a morte entrambi. In "The storm has died away" (traccia [9]) si abbandona al rimorso per l'ira che lo ha spinto a ordinare la loro morte, ritiene inconcepibile che Nadir non abbia mantenuto la parola e rimpiange la gelosia che lo ha spinto a condannare anche Leila. I librettisti Carré e Cormon dichiararono che, se fossero stati consapevoli della grandezza di Bizet, non gli avrebbero imposto il fardello di un libretto che definirono "ours infâme" (orribile orso). Ecco uno dei molti momenti in cui il genio di Bizet trascende i loro sforzi.

Billy Budd di Britten è un altro dei grandi ruoli di sir Thomas. Pochi hanno eguagliato l'equilibrio, l'assenza di affettazione, la semplicità del suo modo di impersonare un personaggio che può essere stucchevole o persino sentimentale. La semplice virtù è la qualità più difficile di tutte da interpretare in teatro. E pochi hanno cantato il ruolo con tale profondità, tale scrupolosa maestria musicale. Nel suo assolo finale, "Billy in the Darbies", (traccia [10]), il protagonista è incatenato sotto coperta in attesa dell'esecuzione. Accetta con calma la sua morte per un delitto – quello di aver colpito e ucciso accidentalmente un

superiore – mentre lui e l'equipaggio, per non parlare del pubblico, sanno che è innocente. Ne è consapevole anche il capitano Vere, che per motivi quasi impossibili da comprendere, certamente nel 1951, decide di seguire le regole alla lettera. Le opere liriche sono piene di scene in cui i personaggi si preparano ad affrontare la morte, ma pochissime si avvicinano alla verità drammatica e umana come questa.

E passiamo dalle stelle a... cose molto divertenti. Sir Thomas è da tempo amico della musica più leggera, soprattutto quella folcloristica e popolare. Ha cantato Eisenstein di Strauss e il Conte Danilo di Lehár in teatro e le sue interpretazioni sono state memorabili. La musica più leggera ripaga le qualità artistiche di questo calibro. Il “Duetto dell'orologio” dal *Fledermaus* (Il pipistrello, (traccia ^[11])) è uno dei momenti più divertenti dell'operetta. Il marito libidinoso assedia una bella donna mascherata che, inevitabilmente, è sua moglie Rosalinde. Tira fuori il suo orologio a ripetizione, strumento infallibile nelle seduzioni precedenti, ma senza successo: Rosalinde se lo mette in tasca, o piuttosto lo nasconde nella scollatura. Si trasformerà in un strumento completamente diverso per smascherare Eisenstein nell'ultimo atto, ma la

vicenda corre sul filo del rasoio: le intenzioni adulterine di Rosalinde corrono il rischio di essere smascherate da un altro strumento scenico, la vestaglia di Eisenstein. Oltre a essere una delle più grandi commedie operistiche *Die Fledermaus*, parla di persone piuttosto spregevoli. Danilo e Hanna nella *Vedova allegra* sono invece modelli di virtù romantica: sono innamorati da molto prima che si alzi il sipario e la vicenda si impenna sui tentativi della donna di fare in modo che lui lo ammetta. Il “Duetto del cavaliere”, (traccia ^[12]), è una di molte schermaglie musicali tra i due, una schermaglia in cui l'uomo ha sbagliato completamente le sue manovre.

E poi ci sono i musical di Broadway. Quello di Billy Bigelow in *Carousel* è, purtroppo, un ruolo che sir Thomas non ha eseguito in teatro (se ne era parlato qualche anno fa), ma di cui ha registrato diversi brani. Qui ne è presente un altro. Il “Soliloquy” di Billy (traccia ^[13]) è la sua reazione alla notizia che sua moglie Julie è incinta. L'uomo immagina come sarà suo figlio, per lo più a sua immagine e somiglianza. Poi arriva un momento d'orrore: e se fosse una bambina? “Disperato” lo descrivono le indicazioni di scena. Ma l'orrore fa posto a una visione di amore e protettività

di sapore quasi verdiano. Naturalmente sarà una bambina e quando la Billy la vede per la prima volta al suo ritorno è una delle più commoventi negli annali di Broadway.

Die tote Stadt, la città sognante e “divinamente decadente” di Korngold, fu una delle opere di maggior successo della sua epoca (1920) e oggi gode di un revival. Paul, il protagonista, ha trasformato la sua casa di Bruges, la città morta del titolo, in un santuario a ricordo della defunta moglie Marie. Poi incontra una cantante, Marietta, identica alla moglie e, nel secondo atto, osserva lei e i suoi amici attori divertirsi vicino a un canale. Quando a Pierrot viene chiesta una canzone, egli esegue “In visions, illusions”, (traccia ^[14]), una delle più seducenti melodie di Korngold. Sulle prime sembra un mero divertimento nella morbosa trama principale, ma il suo argomento è il fascino e il pericolo di vivere nel passato, e può essere considerata fondamentale per l'azione dell'opera. In ogni caso è una melodia meravigliosamente nostalgica e la presenza dei soprani fuori scena preannuncia la successiva carriera hollywoodiana del compositore.

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Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Nato a Seaham, nella contea di Durham, sir **Thomas Allen** ha esordito come professionista con la Welsh National Opera e oggi è una star dei grandi teatri lirici di tutto il mondo. Alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, dove nel 2001 ha festeggiato trent'anni dal suo debutto con la compagnia, ha cantato oltre quaranta ruoli. Nel 2001 ha festeggiato anche il ventesimo anniversario dal suo esordio alla Metropolitan Opera, New York. È un apprezzato interprete per la Lyric Opera di Chicago, l'opera di San Francisco e Los Angeles, la Bayerische Staatsoper di Monaco e la Scala di Milano e partecipa ai festival di Salisburgo e Glyndebourne.

Sono state particolarmente apprezzate le sue interpretazioni di Billy Budd, Pelléas, Eugenio Onieghin, Ulisse e Beckmesser, che si aggiungono ai grandi ruoli mozartiani: il Conte Almaviva, Don Alfonso, Papageno, Guglielmo e, naturalmente, don Giovanni. I suoi ultimi impegni hanno compreso Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), don Alfonso, Ulisse e don Giovanni alla Bayerische Staatsoper; Eleckij (*La dama di picche*), Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) e il ruolo di protagonista in *Sweeney Todd* alla Royal Opera House; Eisenstein per Glyndebourne Festival; Don Alfonso al festival primaverile ed estivo di

Salisburgo; il Guardacaccia (*La volpe astuta*) all'Opera di San Francisco; e Beckmesser alla Metropolitan Opera di New York.

Thomas Allen è altrettanto famoso nelle sale da concerto. Svolge recital nel Regno Unito e in Europa, Australia e America e ha collaborato con le più grandi orchestre e con i direttori di tutto il mondo. Ha registrato la maggior parte del suo repertorio con nomi illustri, tra cui Georg Solti, James Levine, Neville Marriner, Bernard Haitink, sir Simon Rattle, Wolfgang Sawallisch e Riccardo Muti.

Il primo libro di Thomas Allen, *Foreign Parts – A Singer's Journal* è stato pubblicato nel 1993; in seguito è venuto un trionfante esordio nella regia con *Albert Herring* al Royal College of Music. È stato insignito di numerose onorificenze, tra cui quella di Bayerischer Kammersänger dalla Bayerische Staatsoper e la Honorary Membership della Royal Academy of Music. Inoltre è Prince Consort Professor del Royal College of Music, Hambro Visiting Professor of Opera Studies all'università di Oxford, Fellow del Jesus College Oxford, Fellow del Royal College of Music, Fellow della University of Sunderland. Ha ricevuto un M.A. dall'università di Newcastle University e un D.Mus. da quella di Durham. Nel 1989 è stato nominato

Commander of the British Empire e nel 1999 Knight Bachelor.

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 1964.

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.

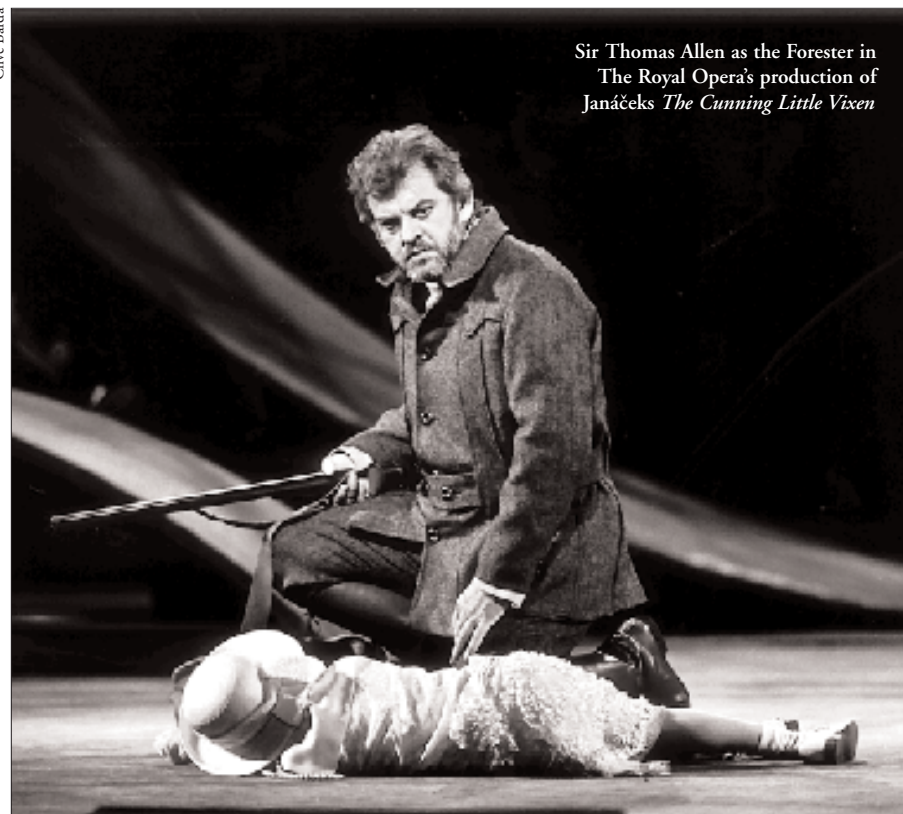
È un frequente visitatore della Spagna dove si è esibito in concerto con la maggior parte delle maggiori orchestre spagnole. Ha diretto la prima spagnola di *Peter Grimes* a Madrid e nel 1996 la prima produzione spagnola di *The Rake's Progress*. È apparso in Germania, Svizzera, Paesi Bassi, al Festival 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 Flying Dutchman*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *A Masked Ball*, *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.

Clive Barba



Sir Thomas Allen as the Forester in
The Royal Opera's production of
Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*



Catherine Ashmore

Sir Thomas Allen in the title role of
The Royal Opera's production
of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*

Catherine Ashmore



Sir Thomas Allen as Count
Danilo in The Royal Opera's
production of Lehár's
The Merry Widow

from Faust

Valentin's Cavatina

Valentin

- [1] Even bravest heart may swell
in the moment of farewell...
Loving smile of sister kind,
quiet home I leave behind,
oft shall I think of you...
Whene'er the wine cup passes round,
when alone my watch I keep,
and my comrades lie asleep
among their arms upon the tented battle ground...
But when danger to glory shall call me,
I still will be first, be first in the fray,
as blithe as a knight in his bridal array.
Careless what fate may befall me,
when glory shall call me.
Yet the bravest heart may swell
in the moment of farewell,
loving smile of sister kind,
quiet home I leave behind,
oft shall I sadly think of you when far away,
when I am far away.

Henry Chorley

from The Barber of Seville

Figaro's Cavatina

Figaro

- [2] La la la lera, la la la la.
I am the barber everyone wants, I am!
La la la, la la la, la la la la.

Up bright and early, don't miss a chance, I don't!
Ah, life is wonderful, life is a pleasure,
when you're the barber *par excellence*, *par excellence*!

You're brilliant, Figaro, wonderful, marvellous,
brilliant!

Master of everything, you lead the dance, ah yes!

Ready to go, I never say no,
from morning to evening I never stop.

It makes me dizzy when I'm so busy,
but I'm the barber who came out on top.

Haircut or colouring, facial or manicure,
you call me out or come to the shop.

And I'm so clever at handling people,
both with the ladies, and with the men too:

with a young girl it's la la la lera,
and with a man it's la la la la la la.

Ah, life is wonderful, life is a pleasure,
when you're a barber *par excellence*, *par excellence*.

Everyone asks for me, everyone looks for me,
older or younger, richer or poorer,

shave me this instant... try a new hairstyle...

I've got a spot here... Give her this letter...

Hey! Figaro, Figaro, Figaro.

Oh God! It's crazy! Oh God!

It's madness! One at a time please.

One at a time, not all at once!

Figaro... I'm here. Hey... Figaro... I'm here.

Figaro there! Figaro where?

Figaro here! Figaro dear...

Figaro go! Figaro no!

Figaro, who? Figaro do.

I can do anything, I can do everything,
I am the barber everyone wants.
You're brilliant, Figaro, wonderful, marvellous,
you never falter in your advance.
La la la la la la!

Cesare Sterbini after Beaumarchais & Petrosellini,
translation by David Parry

from The Marriage of Figaro

Count Almaviva's Recitative and Aria

Count

- [3] 'You've won the case already', what does that
mean? They are out to deceive me. Treachery! I'll
teach them to presume to attack me. They will
be punished; I'll enjoy passing sentence. What if
he's managed to pay off Marcellina? How could
he? He has no money. And then Antonio won't
allow his beloved niece Susanna to marry such a
nobody as Figaro. I will work on Antonio, and
swell his bloated pride. It will work in my
favour... I have decided.

Must I be made to suffer while servants take
their pleasure?

He dares to steal my treasure, she should be
mine by right.

Must passion still torment me, must I stand by
and bless her?

Must Figaro possess her, caress her in my sight?

Must this be so? Must this be so?

Ah, no, I will not spare you, I'll teach you to
betray me!

Impudent slave, how dare you!

Is this how you repay me?

You have the gall to laugh at me in my unhappy
plight.

Only the thought of vengeance for all the grief
you cause me
consoles me and restores me, and fills me with
delight.

Da Ponte after Beaumarchais,
translation by Jeremy Sams

from Tannhäuser

Wolfram's Aria

Wolfram

- [4] With dark foreboding twilight casts her shadows
and like a shroud enfolds the woods and
meadows;
the soul who seeks to climb towards the light
starts out in terror through the realm of light.
There shines a star, the fairest in the heaven
to guide our ways its gentle light was given,
pierce thro' the darkness part the twilight air,
to show the path through this night of despair.
Look down, oh gentle evening star,
shine on this mortal from afar.
For one who never spoke his love,
watch over her as she soars above,
far from this world to heav'n ascending,
to share with angels peace unending!

Richard Wagner,
translation by Rodney Blumer

from The Queen of Spades

Yeletsky's Aria

Yeletsky

- [5] You seem unhappy, my beloved,
as if there's something on your mind...
Confide in me!

Liza

No, really, Prince. It's nothing... I assure you!

(*She makes as to go.*)

Yeletsky

Don't leave me, stay for just a moment, and hear
me,
hear what I must say.
You have my love and my devotion;
in you I see a perfect wife.
For you I'd risk the gravest danger
and gladly sacrifice my life.
But yet I vow my love shall not confine you;
you'll have your independence still.
I'll never question or mistrust you,
or dare to act against your will:
I only long to make you happy!
Don't think I'll be the sort of husband
who lacks all sense of what is right:
I'll care for you like any brother;
this is my purpose day and night.
But I've deceived myself with these illusions
for now the bitter truth is clear.
You look at me without emotion
and hide, perhaps, a secret fear!

Ah, I despair at this remoteness,
and long for you with all my heart!
So say to me how I may banish
these doubts, which keep us both apart.
My dearest one, confide in me!

*M. & P. Tchaikovsky after Pushkin,
translation by David Lloyd-Jones*

from Hamlet

Drinking Song

Hamlet

- [6] Oh wine, deliver me from sadness,
lift this weight from my heart!
Intoxicate me with your madness,
dreams of laughter impart!
Oh, elixir, tempting enchantress,
your mindless ecstasy conquers my heart!

Chorus

Oh, elixir, tempting enchantress,
your mindless ecstasy conquers our heart!
Drink to excess!

Marcellus and Horatio (*aside*)

He's drowning himself in excess.

Hamlet

God knows the number of our short years;
life disappears and it is sombre.
Each one of us carries, alas,
his heavy burden! Cruel affair,
endless despair, being a human!

Marcellus and Horatio (*aside*)

He is mad!

Chorus

He is mad!

Hamlet

Leave me be, evil omens!
Fools are wiser men than we! Ah!
Oh wine, deliver me from sadness,
lift this weight from my heart!
Intoxicate me with your madness,
dreams of laughter impart!
Oh, elixir, tempting enchantress,
your mindless ecstasy conquers my heart!
Sweet dreams impart!

Marcello, Horatio and Chorus

Sweet dreams impart!
Oh, elixir, tempting enchantress,
your mindless ecstasy conquers our heart!
Drink to excess!

*J. Barbier & Carrier after Shakespeare,
translation by Kenneth Richardson*

from Luisa Miller

Miller's Scena and Aria

Wurm

- [7] Stop! You shall listen.

Miller

Wurm!...

Wurm

I overheard you!
The fire of jealous fury rages within me!...
I love your daughter...
A year ago I asked you to grant her hand in
marriage:
you seemed to accept me.
And now the wheel of fortune has turned in my
favour;
my former master is dead and his successor more
generous to me:
yet you go back on your promise! How dare
you?!...

Miller

Be silent... I gave you my consent as a father
on the condition my daughter loved you.

Wurm

And could you not have forced her to accept
what we agreed upon?
Does a father not have his rights?

Miller

What are you saying?
Marriage is sacred and should be entered,
by man and woman, freely and gladly.
Unions that only death casts asunder,
when they are forced, will always end badly.
I am no tyrant. I am a father,
and cannot order my children to love.
Fathers resemble their heavenly father
when they are kindly, and never harsh!
When they are kind, no, and never harsh!

Wurm

You are old now: beware of kindness,
think what your blind emotions could cost, and
dearly!

Miller

Explain yourself.

Wurm

Here, under false pretences,
your sweet young man presents himself:
you are deceived...

Miller

You are certain?... The boy is lying?...

Wurm

I know he is. He is the son of the hated Walter!

Miller

Oh Heavens!... His son, you tell me?...

Wurm

Your master's son. Farewell.

Miller

Then...

Wurm

I have finished.

Miller

He fills my heart with pain!
I was right to be so suspicious!
In my soul the ache of anger
overwhelms me, yet makes me stronger:
sacred honour shall be upheld!
Heaven granted me a daughter

far more precious than my life:
now I beg that bounteous heaven
to protect her and keep her safe.

*Salvatore Cammarano after Schiller,
translation by David Parry*

*from Tannhäuser***Wolfram's Aria****Wolfram**

- [8] Turning my gaze upon this proud assembly
warmth fills my heart to see so fair a sight.
So many heroes, valiant, wise and noble,
a very forest, upright, fresh and green;
and at their sides their virtuous ladies
fresh as a field of fragrant springtime flowers.
All mortal eyes are dazzled by their beauty:
to praise it lies beyond a poet's pow'rs.
Then I look up to stars above me shining,
one holds my gaze more than all others fair:
its radiance fills my heart with chaste devotion,
and rev'rently my soul sinks down in prayer.
And then I seem to see a mystic fountain
so clear and pure I tremble at the sight:
it is the source of ev'ry human pleasure
and fills my heart with wonder and delight.
I never could defile the fountain's beauty
or cloud its purity with wanton deed:
in humble devotion I kneel and guard it,
this holy source of ev'ry human need.
This anthem, hear, and with good heart receive it;
such is the pow'r of love as I perceive it.

Richard Wagner, translation by Rodney Blumer

*from The Pearl Fishers***Zurga's recitative and aria****Zurga**

- [9] The storm has died away.
The winds have ceased their violence.
The world is now sleeping in silence!
But I... I hope in vain for calm to close my eyes.
My agony consumes me
and my soul is distraught.
I've one obsessive thought, Nadir, Nadir.
Ah! Nadir will have to die
when the sun ascends the sky.
O Nadir, best of friends when we were younger.
O Nadir, and I have sent you to your death!
O Nadir, alas what jealous rage and anger,
what is this jealous rage and anger
that is causing my heart to break.
No, no I won't believe it,
it's all a dreadful nightmare,
for you would never break your vow.
The one who's guilty, alas, is me...
What remorse! What regret. What have I done?
O Nadir, best of friends when we were younger;
O Leila, radiant beauty and grace.
O Nadir, O Leila, please forgive all my jealous
anger,
I beg you to forgive the excess of a broken heart.
Evermore the remorse will haunt me.
Nadir, Leila, alas, I'm ashamed of my cruel rage.
Ah! Please forgive the excess of a broken heart.
Ah, forgive me!

Carré & E. Cormon, translation by Amanda Holden

*from Billy Budd***Billy in the Darbies****Billy Budd**

- [10] Look! Through the port comes the moonshine
astray!
It tips the guard's cutlass and silvers this nook;
But 'twill die in the dawning of Billy's last day.
Ay, ay, all is up; and I must up too,
Early in the morning, aloft from below.
On an empty stomach, now, never would it do.
They'll give me a nibble bit of biscuit ere I go.
Sure, a messmate will reach me the last parting
cup;
But turning heads away from the hoist and the
belay,
Heaven knows who will have the running of me
up!
No pipe to those halyards... But aint it all sham?
A blur's in my eyes; it is dreaming that I am.
But Donald he has promised to stand by the plank,
So I'll shake a friendly hand ere I sink.
But no! It is dead then I'll be, come to think.
They'll lash me in hammock, drop me deep,
Fathoms down, fathoms... how I'll dream fast
asleep.
I feel it stealing now;... roll me over fair.
I'm sleepy and the oozy weeds about me twist.

libretto by E.M. Forster and Eric Crozier

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from *Die Fledermaus* (The Bat)

Watch Duet

Eisenstein (*to himself*)

¹¹ Though I'm somewhat out of practice,
the unalterable fact is I must kiss her,
must not miss her;
I'd make love to her right here,
if she'd only let me near.

Rosalinde (*to herself*)

Though his absence should be penal,
his attention's clearly venal.
He should miss me,
but he'd kiss me:
what a dreadful cad he is!
I shall punish him for this.

Eisenstein

In the magic of this moment,
forget the word disgrace!
Raise your mask and end my torment,
for I long to see your face.

Rosalinde

Ah, my dear Marquis, I beg you!
You must never touch a mask.
With your breeding I expect you
to be tactful if I ask.
See him cooing, misconstruing,
no idea whom he's pursuing,
not an inkling, in a twinkling
he would have me in his lap.

In a moment he'll be suing
for relief from his undoing:
we shall view him caught inside
my little trap.

Eisenstein

She's reviewing her undoing
and renewing her resolve.
If she's caught in the trap,
she'll be in my lap.
In a moment she'll be suing
for some relief.
She will be in my lap,
caught inside my little trap.

(*Eisenstein lets his watch strike.*)

Rosalinde (*with weak voice, hand on heart*)

Ah! I'm feeling rather dizzy;
my poor heart is pounding so!

Eisenstein (*observes with triumph*)

Ah, my conquest will be easy:
her excitement starts to grow.

Rosalinde (*as before*)

I am prone to palpitations:
don't concern yourself too much!
Could we check my racing heartbeat
with the chiming of your watch?

Eisenstein

But of course, I have it here!

Rosalinde

Let us count, if you don't mind.

Rosalinde and Eisenstein

Yes, let us count!

Eisenstein

One, two, three, four.

Rosalinde

Five, six, seven, nine.

Eisenstein

No, that can't be right,
you have completely missed out eight.

Rosalinde

You've put me in a dreadful state;
we must change places.

Eisenstein

Places? How?

Rosalinde

Put your hand here upon my breast
and I shall make the watch repeat.
Then both of us will feel the beat.
Now you must count, my dear Marquis!

Eisenstein

At your command!

Rosalinde

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight,
nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen,
fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen,
twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty,
a hundred!

Eisenstein

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, hop,
hop, hop, hop, Wait, I can't keep up! Three four,
five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve,
hop, hop, hop, hop, can't keep up! Six hundred
and nine!

Rosalinde

That surely is your pulse, not mine.

Eisenstein

Oh, mine goes twice as fast.

Rosalinde

No, no, no!

Eisenstein

Half a million at least!

Rosalinde

I think you're trying to confuse me.

Eisenstein

No, you're a devil sent to tease me.

Rosalinde

You shan't repeat your trick this evening!

Eisenstein

She wants to keep my favourite watch, oh my god!

Rosalinde

I thank you most deeply.

Eisenstein

I wonder if...

Rosalinde

Delightful to meet you! Ah!

Eisenstein

She has quite escaped my clutches,
and look where my favourite watch is!

This campaign was too expensive
and the damage is extensive.

My favourite watch!

(He tries to get the watch.)

Excuse me please...

I wonder if...

She has quite escaped my clutches.

My favourite watch, if I only had it back!

Oh god!

This campaign was too expensive

and the damage is extensive.

I have lost my favourite watch!

Ah! It's all my fault! God!

*C. Haffner & R. Genée after Meilhac & Halévy,
translation by David Parry*

from The Merry Widow

Cavalryman Duet

Hanna

- ^[12] Hello, here's a soldier bold,
mounted on his charger;
head to toe in red and gold,
like a maharajah!
Come on, lady don't be shy,
what are you afraid of?

Dare to give the man the eye.

Show him what you're made of!

Danilo

Lady seems to give a wink.

What's the soldier s'posed to think?

Hanna

Silently she seems to say,

this one could go either way!

If a girl's admiring you,

longing for a rendezvous,

would you dare to woo her,

will you look right through her?

What's the soldier going to do?

Would you dare return her glance?

Even ask her out to dance?

No, you couldn't bear to,

no, you wouldn't dare to.

Silly man, you missed your chance!

Hello, soldier's riding back!

Spurs a-jingle jangle.

Time to mount a fresh attack

from a different angle!

Soldier smiles and tips his hat,

moves a little closer.

If you think I'll fall for that,

then the answer's 'No, sir!'

Danilo

If the lady's so blasé,

one could simply ride away.

I've more urgent things to do,

than to waste my time on you!

Hanna

If you'd dared to say hello,

would it have been 'yes' or 'no'?

Would she have relented?

Would she have consented?

Silly man, you'll never know!

Giddy up and off you go.

Danilo

Would she have relented?

Would she have consented?

Luckily, I'll never know!

Giddy up and off I go.

Hanna

Would I have relented?

Would I have consented?

Silly man, you'll never know!

*Léon & Stein after Meilhac,
translation by Jeremy Sams*

from Carousel

Billy Bigelow's Soliloquy

Billy

- ^[13] I wonder what he'll think of me!
I guess he'll call me 'The old man!'
I guess he'll think I can lick
ev'ry other feller's father; well, I can!
I bet that he'll turn out to be
the spittin' image of his dad.
But he'll have more common sense
than his puddin'-headed father ever had.

I'll teach him to wrassle,

and dive through a wave,

when we go in the mornin's for our swim.

His mother can teach him

the way to behave,

but she won't make a sissy out o' him.

Not him! Not my boy! Not Bill! Bill!

My boy, Bill!

(I will see that he's named after me, I will!)

My boy, Bill! He'll be tall

and as tough as a tree, will Bill!

Like a tree he'll grow

with his head held high

and his feet planted firm on the ground,

and you won't see nobody dare to try

to boss him or toss him around!

No pot-bellied, baggy-eyed bully 'll boss him
around.

I don't give a damn what he does,

as long as he does what he likes!

He can sit on his tail,

or work on a rail

with a hammer a-hammerin' spikes.

He can ferry a boat on a river

or peddle a pack on his back,

or work up and down

the streets of a town

with a whip and a horse and a hack.

He can haul a scow along a canal,

run a cow around a corral,

or maybe bark for a carousel.

Of course it takes talent to do that well.

He might be a champ of the heavyweights,
or a feller that sells you glue,
or President of the United States.
That'd be alright too.
His mother would like that...
But he wouldn't be President unless he wanted to
be.
Not Bill!
My boy, Bill! He'll be tall
and as tough as a tree, will Bill!
Like a tree he'll grow
with his head held high
and his feet planted firm on the ground,
and you won't see nobody dare to try
to boss him or toss him around!
No fat bottomed, flabby-faced, pot-bellied,
baggy-eyed bully 'll boss him around.
And I'm damned if he'll marry his boss's daughter,
a skinny-lipped virgin with blood like water,
who'll give him a peck and call it a kiss,
and look in his eyes through a lorgnet.
Say, why am I takin'on like this?
My kid ain't even been born yet!
I can see him when he's seventeen or so,
and startin' in to go with a girl!
I can give him
lots of pointers
very sound,
on the way to get 'round any girl.
I can tell him...
Wait a minute! Could it be?
What the hell! What if he is a girl?

Bill, Oh, Bill! What would I do with her?
What could I do for her?
A bum with no money!
You can have fun with a son,
but you got to be a father
to a girl!
She mightn't be so bad at that,
a kid with ribbons
in her hair!
A kind o' neat and petite
little tin-type of her mother!
What a pair!
I can just hear myself bragging about her!
My little girl,
pink and white
as peaches and cream is she.
My little girl
is half again as bright
as girls are meant to be!
Dozens of boys pursue her,
many a likely lad
does what he can to woo her
from her faithful dad.
She has a few
pink and white young fellers of two and three
but my little girl
gets hungry ev'ry night and she comes home to me!
My little girl, my little girl!
I got to get ready before she comes!
I got to make certain that she
won't be dragged up in slums
with a lot o' bums like me.

She's got to be sheltered
and fed and dressed
in the best that money can buy!
I never knew how to get money
but I'll try,
by God! I'll try!
I'll go out and make it
or steal it,
or take it or die!

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Music (ASCAP)*

from **Die tote Stadt** (The Dead City)

Fritz's Song

Fritz

¹⁴ In visions, illusions, I yearn for the day
love met me on tip-toe, then danced on her way.

The moon on the Rhine shone pale and fine;
two eyes, blue as sapphires, implored me to stay.
They whispered 'Be sweet, be kind.
Don't go, don't leave me behind!
This land is your homeland,
ah, why would you stray?'
But visions, illusions, enticed me away.
Far off horizons kindled my hunger anew.
Lure of the limelight charmed me, what could I do?
Follow my siren's calling,
kiss as my tears were falling.

Sopranos

Ah!

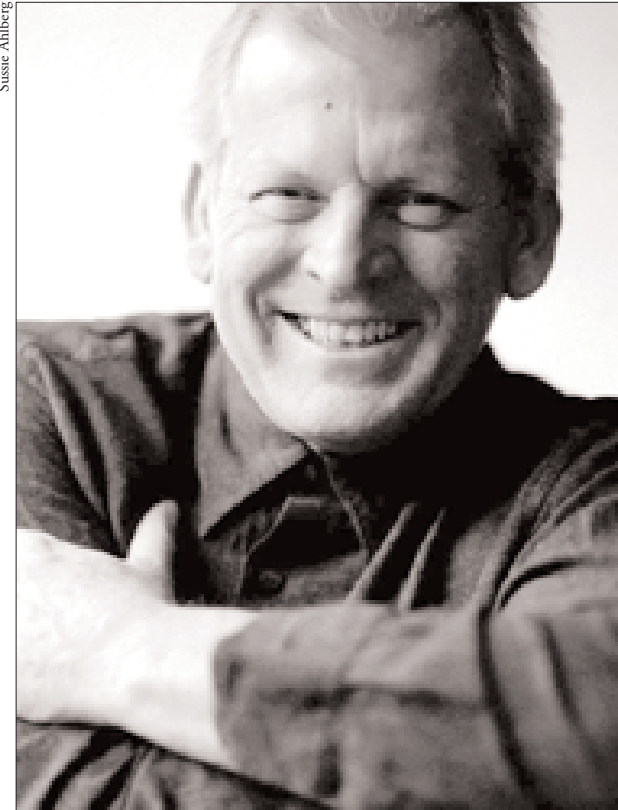
Fritz

Bliss and woe, joy and pain.
Ah, that is Pierrot's refrain.
My visions, illusions are fading away... away...
*Paul Schott after G. Rodenbach,
translation by Christopher Cowell*



Sir Thomas Allen as Valentin
in The Royal Opera's
production of Gounod's *Faust*

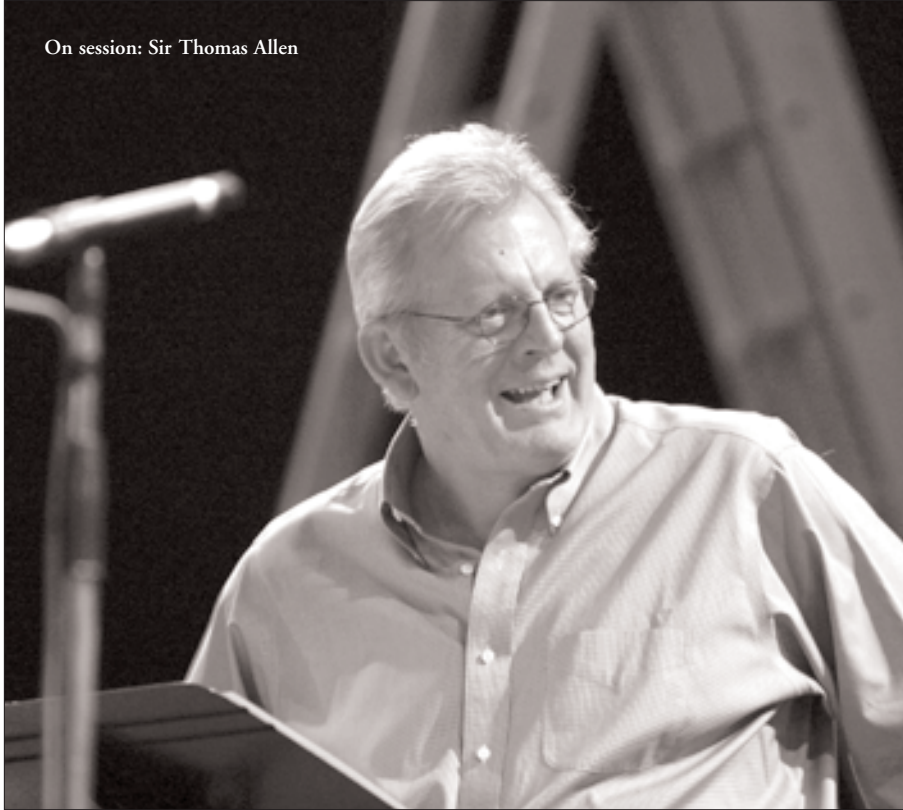
Nigel Luckhurst



Susie Ahlberg

Sir Thomas Allen

On session: Sir Thomas Allen



Bill Cooper

70

On session: Sir Thomas Allen
and Janice Watson



Bill Cooper

71

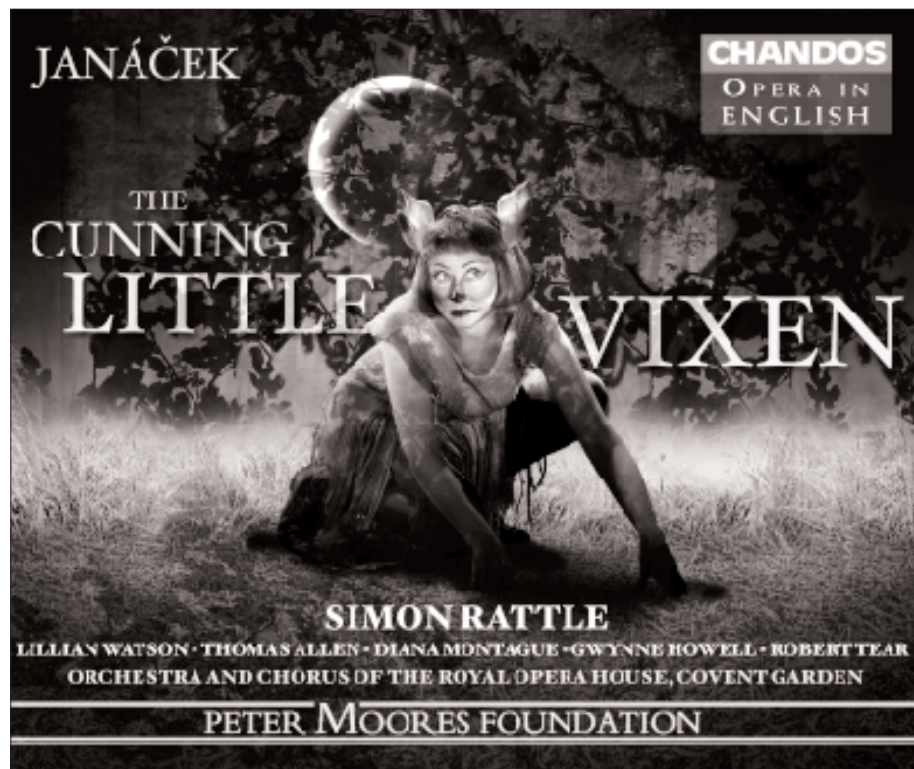


Bill Cooper



Bill Cooper

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Opera in English on Chandos



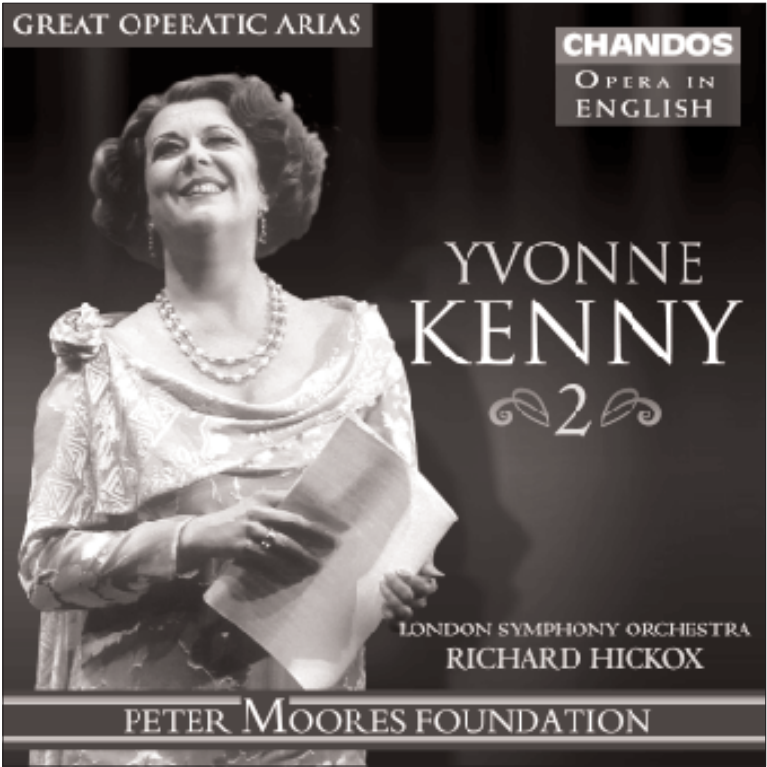
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GREAT OPERATIC ARIAS

CHANDOS DIGITAL

CHAN 3118

SIR THOMAS ALLEN

- | | | | | | |
|----------|--|------|-----------|---|------------------|
| 1 | Charles François Gounod
<i>from</i> Faust
'Even bravest heart may swell' | 3:23 | 8 | Richard Wagner
<i>from</i> Tannhäuser
'Turning my gaze upon this proud assembly' | 4:58 |
| 2 | Gioachino Rossini
<i>from</i> The Barber of Seville
'I am the barber everyone wants, I am!' | 4:45 | 9 | Georges Bizet
<i>from</i> The Pearl Fishers
'O Nadir, best of friends' | 6:26 |
| 3 | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
<i>from</i> The Marriage of Figaro
'Must I be made to suffer' | 4:42 | 10 | Benjamin Britten
<i>from</i> Billy Budd
Billy in the Darbies | 5:36 |
| 4 | Richard Wagner
<i>from</i> Tannhäuser
'Look down, oh gentle evening star' | 4:47 | 11 | Johann Strauss II
<i>from</i> Die Fledermaus (<i>The Bat</i>)
'Though I'm somewhat out of practice'
with Janice Watson soprano | 4:48 |
| 5 | Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
<i>from</i> The Queen of Spades
'You have my love and my devotion' | 4:59 | 12 | Franz Lehár
<i>from</i> The Merry Widow
'Hello, here's a soldier bold'
with Janice Watson soprano | 3:32 |
| 6 | Ambroise Thomas
<i>from</i> Hamlet
'Oh wine, deliver me from sadness'
with Geoffrey Mitchell Choir | 4:13 | 13 | Richard Rodgers
<i>from</i> Carousel
'I wonder what he'll think of me!' | 7:11 |
| 7 | Giuseppe Verdi
<i>from</i> Luisa Miller
'Marriage is sacred' –
'I was right to be so suspicious'
with Brindley Sherratt bass | 8:05 | 14 | Erich Korngold
<i>from</i> Die tote Stadt (<i>The Dead City</i>)
'In visions, illusions' | 3:49
TT 72:35 |

London Philharmonic Orchestra • David Parry

with Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

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