

CHAN 3123(2)



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BEETHOVEN FIDELIO

CHANDOS
OPERA IN
ENGLISH

BEETHOVEN

FIDELIO

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Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Fidelio

Opera in two acts

Libretto by Joseph von Sonnleithner, with revisions by Stephan von Breuning and Georg Treitschke, after Jean-Nicolas Bouilly’s *Léonore, ou L’amour conjugal*

English translation by David Pountney

Rocco, jailerRobert Lloyd *bass*
Marzellina, his daughterRebecca Evans *soprano*
Jaquino, Rocco’s assistantPeter Wedd *tenor*
Don Pizarro, prison governorPavlo Hunka *bass-baritone*
Don Fernando, minister and Spanish noblemanChristopher Purves *bass*
Florestan, a prisonerRichard Margison *tenor*
Leonora, his wife, and assistant to Rocco, under the name of FidelioChristine Brewer *soprano*
First prisonerAshley Catling *tenor*
Second prisonerChristopher Purves *bass*

Philharmonia Orchestra

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

Matthew Rowe associate chorus master

David Parry

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[13] No. 10 Finale: 'Oh, what delight to breathe the air' <i>Chorus, First prisoner, Second prisoner</i>	7:38	[p. 102]
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TT 67:40

COMPACT DISC TWO

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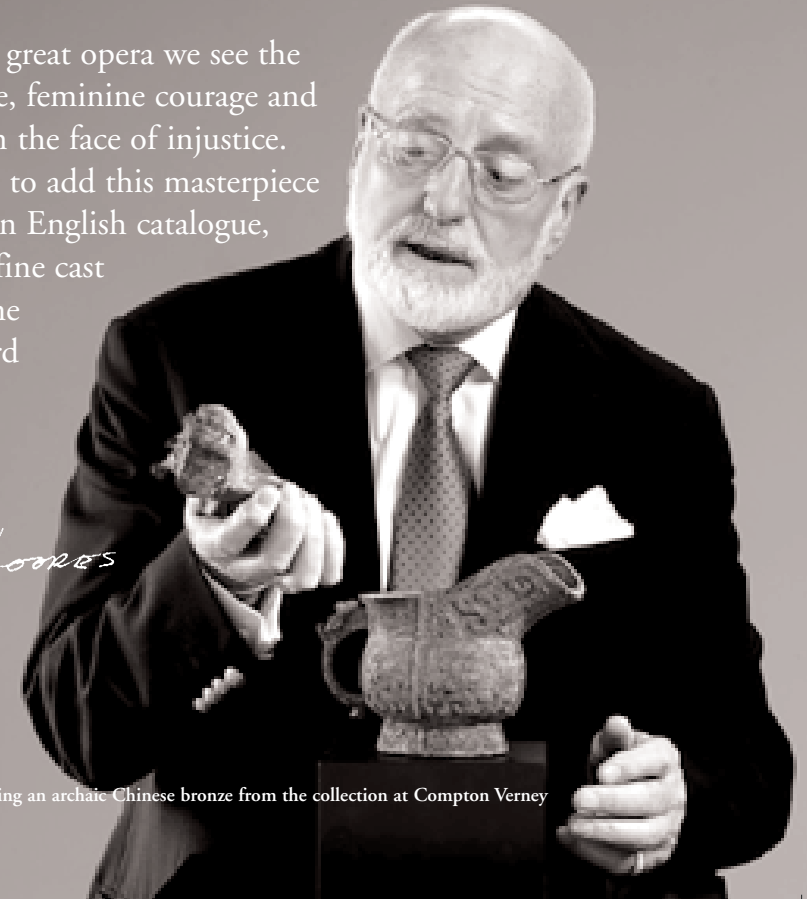
	Time	Page
[5] 'Now bend your back, let's see you working' <i>Rocco, Leonora, Florestan</i>	5:00	[p. 108]
[6] No. 13 Trio: 'In a better world, they surely shall applaud you' <i>Florestan, Rocco, Leonora, Pizarro</i>	6:13	[p. 109]
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In Beethoven's great opera we see the victory of hope, feminine courage and perseverance in the face of injustice. I am delighted to add this masterpiece to our Opera in English catalogue, recorded by a fine cast led by Christine Brewer, Richard Margison and Robert Lloyd.

Peter Moores

May 2005

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



The Only Opera

"*Fidelio*", wrote Thomas Love Peacock at the time of the work's first London performances, combines the profoundest harmony with melody that speaks to the soul. The playfulness of youthful hope, the heroism of devoted love, the rage of the tyrant, the despair of the captive, the bursting of the sunshine of liberty upon the gloom of the dungeon... are portrayed with a force and reality that makes music an intelligible language, possessing an illimitable power of pouring forth thought in sound.

The story of how this 'opera among operas' (Gustav Mahler), 'unique, alike in number and quality' (Otto Klemperer), came about is rich in intriguing contradictions. It did, indeed, turn out to be Beethoven's only completed work for the lyric stage, although significant parts of his life had been involved with opera houses and people, and the search for suitable libretti. Few operas have such a clear political bias – the victory of liberalism over unjust reactionary tyranny – or a closer identification with a specific historical event – the fall of the Bastille in the first French Revolution of 1789 – that it is a surprise to read that its libretto was based loosely on a real-life rescue

story in which an aristocrat was rescued from imprisonment by left-wing revolutionaries. And, whereas the opera in the form in which (as on the present recording) it is widely performed today appears to be as clear-cut and inevitable a piece of writing as any of Beethoven's major scores, it was in fact the product of work put in over a period of more than ten years, taking in four (nearly five) overtures, three musical versions and three substantial libretto revisions.

In the then small German provincial town of Bonn, Beethoven's father was a tenor, and the young composer-to-be soon became involved with the local Court's theatre orchestra, playing the cembalo for performances at the age of twelve and thirteen. Later, following a first trip to Vienna during which he had a lesson or two from Mozart, Beethoven returned home to the life of a jobbing orchestral musician. As a rank-and-file viola player over four and a half seasons, he experienced at first-hand the contemporary light opera repertoire: German and French works in which vocal numbers alternated with spoken dialogue – composers included Grétry,

and Dittersdorf –, Italian *opera buffa* by Cimarosa and Paisiello, some Gluck and three Mozart operas. The influence of such works on Beethoven can be heard as early as his Second (really, First) Piano Concerto, in which the piano appears as a kind of vocal soloist amid orchestral 'arias' and 'recitatives', but, perhaps more importantly, in shaping his view that a dramatic text (be it spoken or set as recitative) was an essential component of effective opera. Thus the operas he most admired – and based his own first efforts on – were Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Cherubini's French works *Lodoïska*, *Les Deux Journées* and *Médée*.

Beethoven's first operatic composition consisted of extra arias for an existing German comic opera (Umlauf's *The Beautiful Cobbler*) but, given his admiration for *The Magic Flute* and (from 1792 onward) his presence in Vienna, it was almost inevitable that his first full-scale opera project should be in tandem with Emanuel Schikaneder, the actor/theatre-manager who had written the book for Mozart's last work. Schikaneder offered him *Vesta's Fire*, a tale of virgins in Ancient Rome who spoke (as Beethoven observed) 'language and verses such as could only proceed out of the mouths of our Viennese apple-women'. By

the beginning of 1804 Beethoven had tired of this text, writing to a friend that Schikaneder's 'empire has really been entirely eclipsed by the light of the brilliant and attractive French operas'. He was referring to both his time in Bonn and to the local success of Cherubini who, by the end of 1803, had had six of his recent operas staged in Vienna in less than two years. Later to the Austrian capital came work by Gaveau, Méhul and Spontini (especially *La Vestale*). Inspired by this new invasion, Beethoven noted, 'I have quickly had an old French libretto adapted and am now beginning to work on it'. This was *Léonore, ou l'amour conjugal* ('Leonora, or Married Love') by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, a play with extensive music, composed originally by Pierre Gaveau.

Work in turning the French *Léonore* into a satisfactory German *Fidelio* would occupy Beethoven intermittently for the next ten years. But his search for other librettos both during that decade and later in his career was almost Puccini-like in its insistence. Possible projects included a *Macbeth* by the writer for whose *Coriolan* he had written an overture, a *Ruins of Babylon* by Treitschke (his third *Fidelio* librettist-to-be), *The Return of Ulysses*, *Romulus and Remus* and *Bacchus*. In the summer of

1811, around the time he was working on the Seventh Symphony, Beethoven told a correspondent, 'It is very difficult to find a good libretto for an opera. Since last year I have turned down no less than twelve or more of them.' Although Beethoven was to write many works for voices and orchestra, the only truly operatic music that survives from these abortive ventures is two Finale movements for two *pasticcios* written by Treitschke.

Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, the writer of *Léonore*, was a lawyer and judge in the service of various French administrations both before and during the Revolution. While an administrator in Touraine in the Jacobin years of the 1790s he claimed, according to memoirs published over forty years later, to have assisted Madame de La Valette, a noblewoman, in her attempts to save her aristocratic husband from the guillotine – 'true-to-life historical events' which (he said) inspired the drama of *Léonore*. Bouilly's and Gaveau's stagework premiered in Paris in February 1798 at the Théâtre Feydeau, whose decidedly superior and unique company of singer/actors was as skilled in reciting dialogue in heroic couplets as it was in singing opera. (Auspiciously, a year before, the first Florestan – composer Gaveau himself – and

the first *Léonore* – Julie-Angelique Scio – had created the roles of Jason and Medea in Cherubini's *Médée*.) Thus, spoken dialogue, favoured by Beethoven anyway and to prove such an important springboard in *Fidelio* between the vocal/instrumental numbers of the opera, was an integral part of his *Leonora* source from the beginning. More of these spun memories of Bouilly's time in office, again detailing a wife's unsinkable loyalty to an unjustly imprisoned husband, inspired his libretto *Les Deux Journées* ('The Water Carrier') for an 1800 opera by Cherubini that was a huge hit in Vienna soon afterwards and an important musical and dramatic influence on Beethoven's work on the *Leonora* subject.

Bouilly's subjects were easily accessible in their straightforward characterisation of good and evil, represented by people and situations that seemed brutally contemporary by comparison with the tales from classical mythology that had dominated the eighteenth-century theatre. In *Leonora* every name in the cast list told something about that character's personality, or social and political standing. Roc (Beethoven's Rocco) is 'rock-steady', unmoved by anything (except money). Fidelio is from the Latin 'fidelis' – faithful, loyal, dependable, all the attributes of Leonora on her incognito

mission to save her husband. Dom Pizare (Beethoven's Pizarro) is a name signifying the abuse of royal power by the Spanish conquistadors during their brutal conquest of the New World. The 'lower' or 'comic' couple have typical servant names – Jaquino ('little James') and Marceline/Marzellina ('little Mary'). By virtue of its veristic connection with the recent events of the Revolution – and made more acceptable by the fact that it tells a moral tale in praise of the strength of marriage – Bouilly's *Léonore* became a 'hot' book in operatic Europe. Following Gaveau, it was set to music in a very short space of time by Ferdinando Paer (in Dresden, 1804) and Simone Mayr (in Padua, 1805) as well as by Beethoven, whose first version reached the stage in Vienna in November 1805.

Beethoven always wanted his opera to be called *Leonora* after the real name of its heroine, rather than *Fidelio* (preferred by managers and publishers to distinguish his work from the *Leonoras* of other composers) after the boy's name she assumes to enter service in the state prison. The opera was given at first in three acts, the first two corresponding to the present Act I. The original Act III had no change of scene: the visit of the Minister, Don Fernando, and the freeing of Florestan took place in the dungeon

where the latter had been imprisoned. The libretto was prepared by Joseph Ferdinand von Sonnleithner, Secretary to the Court Theatre and one of the founders of the city's famous concert-giving organisation, the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. He based his work on a literal translation of Bouilly, also taking over all the opportunities which the French libretto provided for music and, in consultation with Beethoven, working up others from hints in the French dialogue. These new texts for music included the famous Act I Quartet ('A wonder, clear and pure') and all of Pizarro's scenes, including his first big vengeance aria ('Ah, this is ecstasy!') and the dungeon Quartet ('You perish!') – in the Bouilly/Gaveau work the role of Pizarro ('Dom Pizare') was a speaking one.

In this first version of the score, almost all the major music was in place, albeit in slightly longer or melodically differing form. (Some commentators regret the loss by 1814 of the accompanied recitative introduction to, and longer, more florid version of Florestan's and Leonora's 'Oh joy beyond all understanding' duet.) There were also three numbers which, one might say in retrospect, held up the action (and the musical flow) and fortunately were to be cut in 1814. Two – a comic trio for Rocco/Marzellina/Jaquino and a duet for

Marzellina/Leonora – dealt with the opera's less important sub-plot, the proposed marriage of Rocco's daughter Marzellina with her father's new apprentice 'Fidelio'; the third was a second vengeance aria for Pizarro which ended the original Act II.

The work's premiere on 20 November 1805 in Vienna's Theater an der Wien, birthplace too of *The Magic Flute*, was not a public success. Expected Viennese patrons had run away from the invading Napoleonic troops who now occupied the theatre's seats, but failed to recognise the new operas of this true child of their own country. More interested friends persuaded a reluctant Beethoven that his work was too long and Stephan von Breuning, a colleague of the composer's from his Bonn days, revised Sonnleithner's libretto. Three acts became two (in the present layout), much dialogue and almost every musical number was shortened – some, like Pizarro's second aria, drastically. Beethoven resisted strong suggestions to cut the two numbers about the Leonora/Marzellina engagement, so Breuning reordered them in the Act I sequence. A second overture (now called 'Leonora No. 3') was written and played instead of 1805's 'Leonora No 2'. Public and press reaction (March/April 1806) was more

positive but Beethoven decided that the theatre's box office was cheating him and withdrew the score after two apparently seriously under-rehearsed performances.

Almost since his own times, romantically inclined commentators have equated Beethoven's increasing isolation due to his deafness with Florestan's solitary confinement in the underground dungeon, compared the words he sings in his aria ('In the spring of youthful promise I had all my hopes destroyed') with the cry of despair about his deafness in the Heiligenstadt Testament, and identified Leonora, the wife faithful in all adversity, with the life's partner the composer never seemed able to find. It does seem unlikely that Beethoven simply would have let drop a work which he later described as 'of all my children, the one that cost me the worst birth-pangs, the one that brought me the most sorrow; and for that reason it is the one most dear to me. Before all the others I hold it worthy of being preserved and used for the science of art'. Nonetheless six years then followed in which Beethoven completed and had performed Symphonies Nos 4–8, along with a host of other major compositions, but the *Fidelio* project seemed to go quiet, apart from unrealised plans for performances in

Berlin and Prague – the latter being the occasion of Beethoven's writing a third overture for the opera, now called *Leonore* No 1.

Then in 1814 three of the Vienna Court Opera's singers, perhaps influenced by the huge local reception recently given to Beethoven's topical, but decidedly occasional, *Battle* Symphony, asked if they could revive the opera for benefit performances at the Kärntnertor Theatre. Beethoven agreed, on condition that he could make (major) changes in the work, for which he enlisted the help of Georg Friedrich Treitschke, the Court Theatre's poet and stage-manager. Out went the three recalcitrant numbers that had slowed the drama before, practically every other number saw some adjustment (the Act II Trio, 'In a better world, they surely shall applaud you', and Quartet, 'You perish!' were actually extended a little) and, in a major coup, both act Finales were radically rewritten. At the end of Act I, Pizarro's second aria gave way to the emotive closure of the prisoners' return to their cells ('Farewell, the warm and radiant light') while, in Act II, the Minister's arrival and Florestan's pardon, gained both a new open-air setting in the light ('The parade ground of the castle') and a completely through-composed musical setting. This began

with Treitschke's resonant (and politically radical) new text for the Minister's opening address: 'My noble sovereign's will and order bids me to help all those in need... I count all people as my brothers, and seek to help them as I can.' With its unmistakeable overtones of the French Revolutionary Convention's open address to help all the nations of Europe to throw off their oppressors, this text must have caused some comment in an imperial Vienna celebrating the imminent downfall of Napoleon.

The reshaped *Fidelio* was premiered with much success on 23 May 1814 at the Kärntnertor Theatre. In the cast were the three beneficiaries who had commissioned the revival, one of whom, Johann Michael Vogl (Pizarro) was to become the favoured song interpreter of a young composer in the audience, Franz Schubert. Not all the musical revisions came into play straightaway. A new overture (now called 'Fidelio', and intended to lead more naturally into the comic opera music of the opening duet) was started by Beethoven only two days before the premiere and could not be given until the second night; *The Ruins of Athens* overture was played at the first. Rocco's 'gold' aria ('If you don't save up your money'), cut in 1806, was restored to the

opera on July 18, the day on which Leonora's great Act I monologue ('Vile murderer!... Come hope, you faint and distant star'), with some new recitative text by Treitschke probably modelled on the equivalent number in Mayr's *Leonore* opera, was first heard. It was sung by the soprano Anna Milder, whom Haydn had once auditioned with the compliment, 'My dear, you have a voice like a house.' Milder had told Beethoven that she had found the first version of her scena 'a hard struggle... ugly, unvocal and inimicable'; nonetheless she was the only singer to appear in all three premieres of the opera, and she went on to create the soprano role in the Ninth Symphony.

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Synopsis

The opera is set in Spain, in a prison in which Florestan has been imprisoned by the governor, Pizarro, whom he had accused of corruption. Florestan's wife, Leonora, has been looking for him since his disappearance two years previously. Now, disguised as a man and calling herself Fidelio, she has found her way into the prison as an assistant to Rocco, the prison warder.

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

Scene 1

Rocco's house

[1] – [2] Jaquino, the prison porter, tries to persuade Rocco's daughter, Marzellina, to accept his proposal of marriage, but she refuses because she has fallen in love with Fidelio.

[3] Rocco and the disguised Leonora enter, and Leonora is distressed to find that not only has she unwittingly ousted Jaquino from Marzellina's affections, but that Rocco has now approved his daughter's choice. [4] The four characters each express their reactions to this development, after which [5] Rocco advises the young couple to save money if they want a happy marriage.

[6] Leonora begs to be allowed to help Rocco in his work in the lower dungeons of the prison, and from his reply she deduces that one of the prisoners may be her husband, Florestan.

Scene 2

The courtyard of the prison

[7] Pizarro learns that the Minister of State, Don Fernando, is planning a surprise inspection of the prison, having been informed of Pizarro's malpractices. [8] He resolves to dispose of

Florestan at once and orders sentries and a trumpeter to be posted on the watch tower to give him warning of the Minister's approach.

[9] Rocco refuses to be bribed into committing murder but eventually agrees to dig a grave for the disposal of the body; Pizarro will kill Florestan himself. [10] – [11] When they leave, Leonora, who suspects some sort of plot, bursts out in a stream of indignation and passionately confirms her love for her husband. [12] Later she persuades Rocco to let some of the prisoners out into the sun for a while. [13] – [14] As they savour the air and light, Rocco now says that he will not be able to dig the grave by himself, and enlists Leonora's help. [15] – [16] Realising that this prisoner might be Florestan, Leonora is overcome with emotion. [17] – [18] Pizarro returns, angrily orders the prisoners back to their cells, and urges the reluctant Rocco down to the dungeon.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act II

Scene 1

A dungeon in the prison

[1] – [2] Florestan, in solitary confinement and chained to the wall, broods on his terrible fate; [3] then in an ecstatic vision he sees Leonora in

the form of an angel, leading him to freedom. He collapses, exhausted. [4] Rocco and Leonora climb down in the cell to dig the grave. [5] – [7] Leonora recognises Florestan's voice. Rocco, pitying the prisoner's suffering, gives him a little wine and Leonora gives him a piece of bread. She starts to dig his grave.

Rocco gives the signal that everything is ready. Pizarro draws a dagger, gloating over his victim, and is about to stab Florestan when Leonora rushes forward and bars his way. To the amazement of all three, she declares she is Florestan's wife, and when Pizarro threatens her too, she draws a pistol.

A trumpet announces the arrival of the Minister. Rocco calls for light to accompany Pizarro on his way to greet him, and Pizarro rushes off. [8] Leonora and Florestan are reunited.

Scene 2

Outside the prison

[9] – [10] The townsfolk cheer the Minister, who has come to ensure that the King's justice is done. He is astonished when he finds that Florestan has been imprisoned by Pizarro. He arrests Pizarro and hands Leonora the keys to her husband's chains. [11] – [12] Florestan and the people sing in praise of Leonora.



American soprano **Christine Brewer** was born in Illinois and began her professional career with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, with whom she has performed Ellen Orford, Donna Anna and the title roles in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and

Haydn's *Armida*. Other appearances have included Countess Almaviva (New York City Opera and The Royal Opera, Covent Garden), and Donna Anna (Edinburgh Festival under Sir Charles Mackerras and in London, New York and Florida). She has sung Gluck's *Iphigenie en Tauride* in Madrid, Leonora (*Fidelio*) with the St Paul Chamber Orchestra, Weber's *Oberon* with Richard Hickox in London and Strauss' *Die Aegyptische Helena* in Santa Fe. She sang her first Isolde with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Donald Runnicles, Britten's *Gloriana* with Richard Hickox at the Aldeburgh Festival, and Chrysothemis (*Elektra*) with the Cleveland Orchestra and Frans Welser-Möst. She has achieved international renown for her performances of Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*

having sung the role for English National Opera, Opéra de Lyon (in Lyon and Paris), the Santa Fe Festival and in her debut at the Metropolitan Opera under James Levine.

In concert Christine Brewer appears with the major American and British Orchestras under Sir Roger Norrington, Michael Tilson-Thomas, Kurt Masur, John Adams, Christoph von Dohnányi, Raymond Leppard, Mark Wigglesworth, Andrew Litton, John Nelson, Sir Neville Marriner, Wolfgang Sawallisch and Ivan Fischer. Her recordings include Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* and Dvořák's *Tě Deum* with Robert Shaw, *Don Giovanni* under Sir Charles Mackerras, Barber's *Vanessa* under Leonard Slatkin, and she appears in Graham Johnson's complete Schubert Edition.

Recent concert engagements have included gala concerts at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (under Bernard Haitink), Dallapiccola's *Il Prigioniero* at the Monnaie, Brussels (under Antonio Pappano), and she has forged strong links with the BBC Proms, with performances including Britten's War Requiem under Jane Glover, Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* under Sir Andrew Davis, Wagner's *Die Walküre* and Schönberg's *Gurrelieder* under Donald Runnicles, and Mahler's Eighth Symphony under Sir Simon Rattle.



One of the most critically acclaimed singers on the international stage today, Canadian tenor **Richard Margison** has performed in many of the world's leading opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera, the Vienna Staatsoper, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the San Francisco Opera, the Théâtre royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, Covent Garden, the Sydney Opera and the Netherlands Opera.

Roles include Pollione (Bellini's *Norma*) in Washington; Calaf (*Turandot*) with the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto and for The Royal Opera; Dick Johnson (*La fanciulla del West*) in Seattle; Bacchus (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) for The Royal Opera; *Un ballo in maschera* at the Sydney Opera; Manrico (*Il trovatore*), Radamès, Calaf and Bacchus at the Metropolitan Opera in New York; Florestan (*Fidelio*) for Seattle Opera; Radamès and Manrico for the San Francisco Opera; and concert performances of *La gioconda* at Carnegie Hall, and *Fidelio* with the Vancouver Symphony.

A sought-after concert artist, he has appeared with London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, the Montreal and Toronto Symphony Orchestras, the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa and at the Ravinia Festival.

Richard Margison's recordings include *Lanza*, a recording made for the film on the life of Mario Lanza, in which he sings the title role, Verdi's *Don Carlos* with the Royal Opera House Orchestra and Chorus under Bernard Haitink, Tchaikovsky's *Mazeppa* with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Neeme Järvi, three recordings with Richard Bradshaw and the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra: a solo album of *French and Italian Arias, Rarities by Rossini and Verdi*, with Gary Relyea, and *Aria, une sélection de Radio-Canada* with Anita Krause, Wendy Nielson and Gary Relyea. Richard Margison was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2001.

Robert Lloyd was born in Essex and educated at Oxford University. He began life as an academic historian, before turning to a singing career. In 1972 he was appointed Principal Bass at the Royal Opera House, Covent



Garden, where he sings an enormous range of repertoire.

He was the first British bass to sing the title role in Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* at the Royal Opera House, Covent

Garden in 1983. He has also appeared at La Scala, Milan (*Der fliegende Holländer* and *Parsifal*); the San Francisco Opera (*Don Carlos* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*); the Chicago Lyric Opera (*Simon Boccanegra*); the Deutsche Oper Berlin (*Tristan und Isolde*); the Netherlands Opera (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and *Parsifal*); and the Salzburg Festival (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Les Troyens*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Die Zauberflöte* and *Don Giovanni*). His many appearances at the Metropolitan Opera, New York include *Rigoletto*, *Parsifal*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Les Troyens*, *Fidelio*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Benvenuto Cellini*, and for The Royal Opera he has performed in *Simon Boccanegra*, *Don Giovanni*, *Parsifal*, *Aida*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *La fanciulla del West*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Turandot*.

He has appeared in concert with the Cleveland Orchestra under von Dohnányi, the Philadelphia Orchestra under Jansons, the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Haitink and the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Frühbeck de Burgos. With the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis he performed and recorded Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and featured in the Berlioz Odeysey at London's Barbican Concert Hall.

Robert Lloyd has featured in several highly successful television productions, and appeared in a television performance of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* which received the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Television. He has a vast discography of over seventy audio and video recordings and in the 1991 New Year's Honours List he was created a Commander of the British Empire.

Rebecca Evans was born in Pontrhydyfen in South Wales and studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She took part in Welsh National Opera's Young Singers Scheme, and received support from the Peter Moores Foundation to study with Ronald Schneider in Vienna. She has established a major operatic career in America where she



has sung Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) for the Santa Fe Opera and at the Ravinia Festival; Adele (*Die Fledermaus*) for the Chicago Lyric Opera; Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Ann Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) and Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*)

for San Francisco Opera; and both Susanna and Zerlina for the Metropolitan Opera, New York.

In Europe, she is a regular guest at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, where her roles have included Susanna, Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Zdenka (*Arabella*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*) and, most recently, Nanetta (*Falstaff*) conducted by Zubin Mehta. Elsewhere she has sung Ilia for the Netherlands Opera and Opéra de Lausanne; the title role of *The Cunning Little Vixen* for Scottish Opera; Susanna, Ilia, Marzelline (*Fidelio*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*) and Hero (*Beatrice and Benedict*) for Welsh National Opera; Romilda (*Xerxes*) for English National Opera; and Pamina (*The Magic Flute* under Sir Charles Mackerras), Zerlina, Nanetta and Johanna (*Sweeney Todd*) at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Her extensive concert experience includes appearances at the BBC Proms and Edinburgh International Festival. She has performed Bach's *Magnificat* with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, and Brahms' Requiem with the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jeffrey Tate at the Tanglewood Festival.

Her many recordings include Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*) and Ilia (*Idomeneo*) for Chandos' Opera in English series, Nanetta (*Falstaff*) with Sir John Eliot Gardiner, a series of Gilbert and Sullivan recordings with Sir Charles Mackerras, and a solo recording of Italian songs.



Peter Wedd studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with William McAlpine and subsequently at the National Opera Studio. He was a Company Principal at The Royal

Opera, Covent Garden from 1999 to 2001 and is a regular guest artist for Welsh National

Opera. As a Company Principal of The Royal Opera he sang many small roles as well as Ywain (*Gawain and the Green Knight*) and Kudrjas (*Kar'a Kabanová*), and he returned as a guest artist to sing Borsa (*Rigoletto*).

At Welsh National Opera his roles have included Don José (*Carmen*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Alfredo (*La traviata*) and Laça (*Jenůfa*). Other appearances in the UK and Ireland have included Federico (*L'arlesiana*) and Pluto (*Orphée aux enfers*) for Opera Holland Park, Kyska (*Šarkatán*) and Julius (*I cavalieri di Ekebu*) at the Wexford Festival, Satyavan (*Savitri*) at the Aldeburgh Festival, Rodolfo (*La Bohème*) at London's Royal Albert Hall, and Tamino for Glyndebourne on Tour. Outside the UK Peter Wedd has sung Tamino and Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*) for European Chamber Opera, as well as Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) for the Singapore Lyric Theatre.

He is much in demand as a concert artist and has worked with orchestras including the London Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, City of London Sinfonia, Northern Sinfonia and the Bournemouth Symphony. His wide concert repertoire includes most of the major

oratorios and choral works. Recordings for Chandos' Opera in English series include *Turandot*, *Jenůfa* and *The Flying Dutchman*.



Born in England, the son of a Ukrainian father and an English mother, **Pavlo Hunka** qualified as a linguist and practised as lawyer in the UK before embarking on a singing career. He began his vocal studies at the

Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, and completed them in Switzerland with Kammersängerin Maria Sandulescu.

He sang many of the major roles in the bass-baritone repertoire whilst on contract for three years in Basel, Switzerland. Since then he has sung in most of the leading opera houses in the world, including Paris, Vienna, Munich, Florence, Amsterdam, London and Salzburg. He has sung under Claudio Abbado, Jeffrey Tate, Semion Bychkov, Zubin Mehta, Peter Schneider, and Mark Wigglesworth amongst others.

Repertoire includes Barak (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), the title role in *Wozzeck*, Golaud

(*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Bluebeard (*Duke Bluebeard's Castle*), Pizarro (*Fidelio*), Kaspar (*Der Freischütz*), the title role in *The Flying Dutchman*, Lysiart (*Euryanthe*) and many bass-baritone roles in the Russian, Wagnerian and Italian repertoires.

Highlights of recent seasons include Shaklovity (*Khovanshchina*) and *The Capture of Troy* with English National Opera; Zumbeltz in Bilbao; Dr Schön/Jack (*Lulu*) at the Bonn Opera; the title role in *Falstaff*; Alberich (*Siegfried*) and Hunding (*Die Walküre*) all at the Canadian Opera Toronto; Tomschi (*Pique Dame*) at the Teatro Real Madrid; and Siskov (*From the House of the Dead*) at Geneva Opera.



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

group's demise in 1988, he resumed vocal training with David Keren, Diane Forlano and Janice Chapman.

His operatic engagements include Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*) for Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera and Opera North; Marcello (*La Bohème*) for Scottish Opera; Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*) for Welsh National Opera and Opera North; Podesta (*La gazza ladra*) for Garsington Opera; Siegfried (*Genoveva*) and Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) both for Opera North. He created the role of Executioner in James Macmillan's *Ines de Castro* and has performed Macmillan's *Parthenogenesis* at the Edinburgh Festival, where he has also appeared as Cecil in *Maria Stuada* under Sir Charles Mackerras.

Concert engagements include Mozart's Mass in C at Aix-en-Provence with the Sixteen, Stravinsky's *Les Noces* with Philippe Herreweghe in Brussels, Monteverdi's Vespers 1610 with Richard Hickox, John Tavener's *Apocalypse* at the Proms with the City of London Sinfonia, the *St John Passion* with Paul Goodwin in Madrid, *Messiah* with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, *Les Mamelles de Térésias* with the London Sinfonietta under Sir Simon Rattle, Britten's *War Requiem* and Haydn's *Creation* with the Ulster Orchestra, *Belshazzar's Feast* with the English Northern Sinfonia under Paul Daniel, and Lucifer in Handel's *La Resurrezione* for Paul McCreesh.

Christopher Purves gave his debut recital at the Aldeburgh Festival in June 2004. His recordings include the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Gottardo (*The Thieving Magpie*), and *The Magic Flute*, all for Chandos' Opera in English series.



Ashley Catling studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with William McAlpine and at the National Opera Studio, supported by a scholarship from the Friends of Covent

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

Ashley Catling has appeared in concert at such venues as the Barbican Concert Hall, Royal Glasgow Concert Halls, Queen Elizabeth Hall, St John's Smith Square and St Martin in the Fields. Recent performances include *St Matthew Passion* in Winchester Cathedral, a recital of Britten songs for voice

and harp at Aldeburgh, and European and American tours performing and recording Steve Reich's new video opera *Three Tales* with the composer.

Performances include *The Stargazer*, a new London Mozart Players commission for solo tenor and symphony orchestra by Lynne Plowman, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) with Opera by Definition, *Die Fledermaus* in Dublin Grand Opera House, Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) for Opera Holland Park, John Millar Jnr in David Horne's *Friend of the People* for Scottish Opera, Gawain in the world premiere of Lynne Plowman's opera *Gawain and the Green Knight* with Music Theatre Wales, and Tamino (*The Little Magic Flute*) with Opera North. Recordings include *Contrabandista*, and *L'Esule di Granata* for Opera Rara.

One of the world's great orchestras, the **Philharmonia Orchestra** is now in its sixth season with renowned German maestro Christoph von Dohnányi as Principal Conductor. That post was first held by Otto Klemperer, and the Orchestra has since had important collaborations with Lorin Maazel (as Associate Principal Conductor), Riccardo Muti (as Principal Conductor and Music

Director), Giuseppe Sinopoli (as Music Director) and, currently, Kurt Sanderling (as Conductor Emeritus), Vladimir Ashkenazy (as Conductor Laureate) and Sir Charles Mackerras (as Principal Guest Conductor), besides such eminent figures as Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan and Carlo Maria Giulini. It continues to engage world-class conductors and soloists, and attracts Europe's most talented young players to join its orchestral ranks.

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

An increasing number of the Orchestra's concerts are being broadcast by BBC Radio 3, including its annual performance at the BBC Proms. As the world's most recorded symphony orchestra, with over 1000 releases to its credit, among these a number of

television and feature film soundtracks, the Philharmonia Orchestra enjoys a worldwide reputation. The discography includes, for Opera Rara, several recital discs as well as eleven complete operas, and for Chandos, in the Opera in English series sponsored by the Peter Moores Foundation, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia of Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Turandot*, the award-winning *Tosca* and solo recital albums of operatic arias with Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny and John Tomlinson. The Philharmonia Orchestra continues to consolidate its international renown through regular tours and through recent prestigious residencies at the Châtelet Théâtre Musical in Paris, the Megaron in Athens and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York.

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.



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

Music Director of Opera 80 from 1983 to 1987 and since 1992 has been the founding Music Director of Almeida Opera.

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

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

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

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

Belgian Prix Cecilia for Donizetti's *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*. For Chandos he has conducted a series of recitals of operatic arias – with Sir Thomas Allen, Bruce Ford, Alan Opie, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Barry Banks, 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 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.

Seine einzige Oper

“*Fidelio*” schrieb Thomas Love Peacock anlässlich der ersten Aufführungen des Werks in London,

verbindet die tiefstinnigste Harmonik mit einer Melodik, die sich der Seele unmittelbar mitteilt. Die Verspieltheit jugendlicher Hoffnung, der Heroismus hingebungsvoller Liebe, die Wut des Tyrannen, die Verzweiflung des Gefangenen, das Hereinbrechen der Sonne der Freiheit über die Düsternis des Kerkers ... werden mit einer Kraft und Realität dargestellt, die die Musik zu einer verständlichen Sprache machen, welche die unbeschränkte Macht besitzt, Gedanken in Klängen zu verströmen.

Die Entstehungsgeschichte dieser “Oper aller Opern” (Gustav Mahler), “einzigartig gleichermaßen in Zahl und Qualität” (Otto Klemperer), ist reich an fesselnden Widersprüchen. Tatsächlich sollte dies Beethovens einziges vollendetes Werk für die lyrische Bühne werden, obwohl er einen beachtlichen Teil seines Lebens mit Opernhäusern und -menschen und der Suche nach passenden Libretti verbrachte. Nur wenige Opern enthalten eine solch eindeutige politische Aussage – der Sieg des Liberalismus

über ungerechte reaktionäre Tyrannei – oder identifizieren sich noch unmittelbarer mit einem spezifischen historischen Ereignis, hier dem Fall der Bastille in der französischen Revolution von 1789; daher ist es umso überraschender zu erfahren, daß das Libretto frei auf eine wahre Rettungsgeschichte zurückgeht, in der ein Aristokrat von linken Revolutionären aus der Gefangenschaft befreit wurde. Und während die Oper in der Form, in der sie heute (wie auch auf der vorliegenden Aufnahme) weithin aufgeführt wird, als eine ebenso klare und zielgerichtete Komposition erscheint wie jedes andere große Werk Beethovens, war sie in Wirklichkeit das Produkt eines mehr als zehnjährigen Arbeitsprozesses, in dessen Verlauf vier (fast fünf) Ouvertüren und drei musikalische Fassungen entstanden sowie drei grundlegende Revisionen des Librettos vorgenommen wurden.

Beethovens Vater wirkte in der damals kleinen Provinzstadt Bonn als Tenor, und der junge angehende Komponist knüpfte schon bald Kontakte zum Orchester des örtlichen Hoftheaters, wo er bereits im Alter von zwölf und dreizehn Jahren bei den Aufführungen

Cembalo spielte. Später, nach einem ersten Besuch in Wien, wo er bei Mozart ein oder zwei Unterrichtsstunden nahm, kehrte er nach Hause zurück, wo das Leben eines regulären Orchestermusikers auf ihn wartete. Während viereinhalb Spielzeiten als einfacher Bratschist sammelte er aus erster Hand Erfahrungen mit der zeitgenössischen leichten Oper – deutsche und französische Werke von Komponisten wie Grétry und Dittersdorf, in denen Vokalnummern mit gesprochenem Dialog abwechselten, italienische *opera buffa* von Cimarosa und Paisiello, etwas Gluck sowie drei Opern von Mozart. Den Einfluß solcher Werke kann man bereits in seinem Zweiten (eigentlich Ersten) Klavierkonzert hören, in dem das Klavier als eine Art Vokalsolist inmitten von orchestralen “Arien” und “Rezitativen” erscheint; noch stärker zu spüren ist er aber in seiner Prägung von Beethovens Überzeugung, daß ein dramatischer Text (sei er gesprochen oder als Rezitativ gesetzt) wesentlicher Bestandteil jeder wirkungsvollen Oper zu sein habe. Die von ihm am meisten bewunderten Opern – auf denen auch seine ersten eigenen Versuche basierten – waren daher Mozarts *Zauberflöte* und Cherubinis französische Werke *Lodoïska*, *Les Deux Journées* und *Médée*.

Beethovens erste Komposition in der Gattung Oper bestand aus einer Reihe von zusätzlichen Arien für eine bereits existierende deutsche komische Oper (Umlaufs *Die schöne Schusterin*); bedenkt man jedoch seine Bewunderung für die *Zauberflöte* und (ab 1792) seinen Wohnort Wien, so war es fast unvermeidlich, daß sein erstes ausgewachsenes Opernprojekt in Zusammenarbeit mit Emanuel Schikaneder entstehen sollte, dem Schauspieler und Theatermanager, der zu Mozarts letztem Werk das Textbuch geschrieben hatte. Schikaneder bot ihm *Vestas Feuer* an, eine Geschichte über die Vestalinnen im alten Rom, die (wie Beethoven bemerkte) “eine Sprache und Verse von sich gaben, welche eigentlich nur aus den Mündern unserer Wiener Apfelweiber stammen könnten”. Anfang des Jahres 1804 war Beethoven diesen Text leid und schrieb einem Freund, Schikaneders “Imperium ist vom Licht der brillanten und reizenden französischen Opern wirklich völlig in den Schatten gestellt worden.” Dabei bezog er sich sowohl auf seine Bonner Zeit als auch auf Cherubinis Wiener Erfolg, wo dieser bis Ende 1803 in weniger als zwei Jahren sechs seiner neuesten Opern zur Aufführung gebracht hatte. Später erreichten die österreichische

Hauptstadt Werke von Gaveau, Méhul und Spontini (besonders *La Vestale*). Von dieser neuen Invasion inspiriert schrieb Beethoven, "ich habe flink ein altes französisches Libretto überarbeiten lassen und beginne nun mit dem Komponieren." Dies war *Léonore, ou l'amour conjugal* ("Leonore oder die eheliche Liebe") von Jean-Nicholas Bouilly, ein Schauspiel mit ursprünglich von Pierre Gaveau komponierten ausgedehnten Musikeinlagen.

Die Aufgabe, die französische *Léonore* in einen annehmbaren deutschen *Fidelio* zu verwandeln, sollte Beethoven – mit Unterbrechungen – für die nächsten zehn Jahre beschäftigen. Zugleich aber war seine Suche nach anderen Libretti sowohl in diesem Jahrzehnt als auch später in seiner Laufbahn in ihrer Beharrlichkeit fast eines Puccini würdig. Mögliche Kandidaten waren unter anderem ein *Macbeth* von der Hand des Autors, für dessen *Coriolan* Beethoven eine Ouvertüre geschrieben hatte, ein Werk mit dem Titel *Ruinen von Babylon* von Treitschke (der sein dritter *Fidelio*-Librettist werden sollte), sowie *Die Rückkehr des Odysseus*, *Romulus und Remus* und *Bacchus*. Im Sommer des Jahres 1811, etwa zu der Zeit als er an der Siebten Sinfonie arbeitete, teilte Beethoven einem Korrespondenten mit: "Es ist sehr schwierig,

ein gutes Libretto für eine Oper zu finden. Seit letztem Jahr habe ich nicht weniger als zwölf oder noch mehr davon abgelehnt." Obwohl Beethoven zahlreiche Werke für Vokalstimmen und Orchester schreiben sollte, beschränkt sich die einzige wirklich opernhafte Musik, die von diesen erfolglosen Versuchen überlebt hat, auf die Finale-Sätze zu zwei *Pasticcios* aus der Feder Treitschkes.

Jean-Nicholas Bouilly, der Autor von *Léonore*, war vor der Revolution Jurist und Richter im Dienst verschiedener französischer Verwaltungen. In seinen mehr als vierzig Jahre später veröffentlichten Memoiren behauptet er, während der jakobinischen Ära der 1790er Jahre, die er als Administrator in der Touraine verbrachte, die adelige Madame de La Valette bei ihren Versuchen unterstützt zu haben, ihren aristokratischen Mann vor der Guillotine zu retten – "lebenswahre historische Ereignisse", die, wie er sagte, ihn zu dem Drama der *Léonore* inspirierten. Bouillys und Gaveaus Bühnenwerk wurde im Februar 1798 im Pariser Théâtre Feydeau uraufgeführt, dessen einzigartig begabtes und herausragendes Ensemble von Sänger-Schauspielern Dialoge in heroischen Couplets ebenso gekonnt rezitierte wie es Opernarien sang. (Ein vielversprechender Umstand war, daß ein Jahr

zuvor der erste Florestan – der Komponist Gaveau selbst – und die erste Léonore – Julie-Angelique Scio – in Cherubinis *Médée* die Rollen des Jason und der Medea geschaffen hatten.) Somit war der gesprochene Dialog – den Beethoven ohnehin favorisierte und der im *Fidelio* ein so wichtiges Verbindungsglied zwischen den vokal-instrumentalen Nummern der Oper bilden sollte – bereits von Anfang an integraler Bestandteil seiner *Leonore*-Quelle. Andere derartig ausgespinnene Erinnerungen aus Bouillys Amtszeit, die ebenfalls die unverbrüchliche Loyalität einer Frau ihrem zu Unrecht eingekerkerten Ehemann gegenüber schildern, regten sein Libretto *Les Deux Journées* ("Der Wasserträger") an, das Cherubini für seine im Jahr 1800 vollendete Oper verwendete; dieses Werk feierte in Wien schon bald große Erfolge und bot Beethoven bei seiner Arbeit an dem *Leonore*-Stoff wichtige musikalische und dramatische Anregungen.

Bouillys Themen waren sehr eingängig in ihrer geradlinigen Charakterisierung von Gut und Böse, dargestellt von Menschen und Situationen, die – verglichen mit den Legenden der klassischen Mythologie, die das Theater im achtzehnten Jahrhundert geprägt hatten – auf brutale Weise aktuell wirkten. In

Leonore verrät jeder einzelne Name in der Liste der Darsteller etwas über die Persönlichkeit, den gesellschaftlichen Rang oder die politische Einstellung der jeweiligen Figur. Roc (Beethovens Rocco) ist "standhaft wie ein Fels" und läßt sich von nichts (außer Geld) bewegen. Fidelio leitet sich von dem lateinischen "fidelis" ab – treu, loyal, verlässlich, alles Attribute der Leonore während ihrer geheimen Mission zur Rettung ihres Mannes. Dom Pizare (Beethovens Pizarro) ist ein Name, der für den Mißbrauch königlicher Macht durch die spanischen Conquistadores während ihrer brutalen Eroberung der Neuen Welt steht. Das "niedere" oder "komische" Paar trägt typische Dienstenamen – Jaquino ("kleiner Jakob") und Marceline/Marzelline ("Mariechen"). Aufgrund ihrer veristischen Verbindung mit den nur kurze Zeit zurückliegenden Ereignissen der Revolution, die durch den Umstand zusätzlich akzeptabel gemacht werden, daß es sich um eine Moralgeschichte zur Verherrlichung der Macht der Ehe handelt, wurde Bouillys *Léonore* in der europäischen Oper ein "heißer" Stoff. Nach Gaveau vertonten es innerhalb kurzer Zeit Ferdinando Paer (1804 in Dresden) und Simone Mayr (1805 in Padua) sowie

schließlich auch Beethoven, dessen erste Fassung in Wien im November 1805 auf die Bühne kam.

Beethoven wollte immer, daß seine Oper nach dem Namen seiner wahren Heldin *Leonore* benannt werde und nicht – wie es die Manager und Herausgeber vorzogen, um sein Werk von den *Leonore*-Vertonungen anderer Komponisten zu unterscheiden – *Fidelio* nach dem Jungennamen, den sie annimmt, um in den Dienst des Staatsgefängnisses zu treten. Die Oper bestand zunächst aus drei Akten, von denen die ersten beiden dem heutigen Ersten Akt entsprechen. Der ursprüngliche Dritte Akt enthielt keinen Szenenwechsel: Der Besuch des Ministers Don Fernando und die Befreiung Florestans spielten beide in dem Kerker, in dem letzterer gefangensaß. Das Libretto schrieb Joseph Ferdinand von Sonnleithner, Sekretär des Hoftheaters und eines der Gründungsmitglieder der berühmten konzertveranstaltenden Organisation der Stadt, der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. Sein Text basierte auf einer wortgetreuen Übersetzung von Bouilly, wobei auch sämtliche in der französischen Vorlage enthaltenen Gelegenheiten für Musikeinlagen übernommen wurden; weitere Nummern schuf Sonnleithner in enger Abstimmung mit

Beethoven, indem er Hinweisen in den französischen Dialogen folgte. Zu diesen neuen für musikalische Szenen verwendeten Texten gehört das berühmte Quartett im Ersten Akt (“A wonder clear and pure” – “Mir ist so wunderbar”) sowie die gesamte Musik Pizarros, darunter auch seine erste große Rachearie (“Ah, this is ecstacy” – “Ha! Welch ein Augenblick”) und das Kerkerquartett (“You perish” – “Er sterbe!”); bei Bouilly/Gaveau fiel Pizarro (“Dom Pizarre”) lediglich eine Sprechrolle zu.

In dieser ersten Fassung des Werks hatten schon fast alle großen Nummern ihren Platz, allerdings in geringfügig längerer oder melodisch abweichender Form. (Einige Kritiker bedauern den bereits 1814 eingetretenen Verlust der begleiteten Rezitativ-Einleitung zu Florestans und Leonores “O namenlose Freude!” (“Oh joy beyond all understanding”) sowie der längeren und ausgeschmückteren Fassung dieses Duetts.) Auch gab es drei Nummern, die, so könnte man rückblickend meinen, die Handlung (und den musikalischen Fluß) aufhielten und glücklicherweise 1814 ebenfalls entfernt wurden. Zwei von ihnen – ein komisches Trio für Rocco/Marzelline/Jaquino und ein Duett für Marzelline/Leonore – befaßten sich mit

der weniger wichtigen Nebenhandlung der Oper, der geplanten Vermählung von Roccas Tochter Marzelline mit dem neuen Lehrling ihres Vaters, “Fidelio”; bei der dritten handelte es sich um eine zweite Rachearie für Pizarro, mit der der ursprüngliche Zweite Akt endete.

Die Premiere der Oper am 20. November 1805 im Theater an der Wien, wo auch die *Zauberflöte* an die Welt trat, war kein Publikumserfolg. Die erwarteten Wiener Gönner waren vor den hereinbrechenden napoleonischen Truppen geflohen, die nun die Theatersessel besetzten, die jedoch unfähig waren, die neuen Opern dieses wahren Kindes ihres Landes zu erkennen. Interessiertere Freunde überzeugten den widerstrebenden Beethoven davon, daß das Werk zu lang sei, und Stephan von Breuning, ein Kollege des Komponisten aus seiner Bonner Zeit, überarbeitete daraufhin Sonnleithners Libretto. Aus drei Akten wurden zwei (in der gegenwärtigen Anordnung), viel Dialog und fast jede einzelne musikalische Nummer wurden gekürzt, davon einige – etwa Pizarros zweite Arie – drastisch. Beethoven weigerte sich, dem wärmstens geäußerten Rat zu folgen und die beiden von der Verlobung Marzellines mit Leonore handelnden Nummern zu streichen, also stellte Breuning sie in der

Abfolge des Ersten Akts um. Eine zweite Ouvertüre (heute als “*Leonore* Nr. 3” bezeichnet) wurde anstelle der 1805 erklangenen “*Leonore* Nr. 2) gespielt. Die Reaktion von Öffentlichkeit und Presse im März/April 1806 war positiver, doch Beethoven entschied, daß die Theaterkasse ihn betrog, und zog die Partitur nach zwei offensichtlich schlecht geproben Aufführungen zurück.

Beinahe bis in Beethovens eigene Zeit zurückverfolgen lassen sich die romantischen Deutungen einiger Kritiker, die die durch seine Taubheit bedingte zunehmende Isolation mit Florestans Einzelhaft in dem unterirdischen Kerker gleichsetzten, die von diesem in seiner Arie gesungenen Worte (“In the spring of youthful promise I had all my hopes destroyed” – “In des Lebens Frühlingstagen ist das Glück von mir geflohn”) mit dem Ausruf der Verzweiflung über seine Gesundheit in seinem Heiligenstädter Testament verglichen und Leonore, die trotz aller Widrigkeiten standhafte Gattin, mit der Lebenspartnerin identifizierten, die zu finden Beethoven nie vergönnt gewesen zu sein scheint. Es ist kaum anzunehmen, daß Beethoven einfach ein Werk fallen lassen würde, von dem er später schrieb, es sei “von

allen meinen Kindern dasjenige, das mir die schlimmsten Geburtswehen bereitete, das mir den größten Schmerz brachte; und aus diesem Grund ist es mir das liebste. Mehr als alle anderen halte ich es für wert, erhalten zu bleiben und für die Kunstwissenschaft verwendet zu werden.“ Trotzdem folgten nun sechs Jahre, in denen Beethoven neben einer Vielzahl anderer größerer Kompositionen seine Sinfonien Nr. 4–8 vollendete und zur Aufführung brachte, während es um das *Fidelio*-Projekt still wurde – abgesehen von nicht realisierten Plänen für Aufführungen in Berlin und Prag; letztere waren übrigens der Anlaß, zu dem Beethoven eine dritte Overtüre zu der Oper schrieb, die heute als *Leonore* Nr. 1 bezeichnet wird.

1814 schließlich fragten drei Sänger der Wiener Hofoper – möglicherweise unter dem Eindruck des überaus großen Erfolgs, der kurz zuvor in Wien Beethovens aktueller, doch auch ausgesprochen an das Tagesgeschehen gebundener *Schlachtsymphonie* zuteil geworden war – ob sie die Oper für Benefiz-Aufführungen am Kärntnertor-Theater neu inszenieren könnten. Beethoven stimmte unter der Bedingung zu, daß er an dem Werk (größere) Eingriffe vornehmen könne, für die er auf die Hilfe von Georg Friedrich Treitschke

zurückgriff, der als Dichter und Bühnenleiter am Hoftheater wirkte. Die drei störrischen Nummern, die das Drama verlangsamt hatten, wurden entfernt, fast jede der verbleibenden Nummern wurde einigen Anpassungen unterzogen (das Trio “Euch werde Lohn in bessern Welten” und das Quartett “Er sterbe!” (“You perish!”) im Zweiten Akt wurden übrigens etwas erweitert) und die Finale der beiden Akte in einem großen Wurf radikal umgeschrieben. Pizarros zweite Arie am Ende des Ersten Akts mußte dem emotionalen Schlußchor weichen, in dem die Gefangenen in ihre Zellen zurückkehren (“Farewell, the warm and radiant light” – “Leb wohl, du warmes Sonnenlicht”), während im Zweiten Akt die Ankunft des Ministers und Florestans Begnadigung einen neuen Schauplatz im Freien gewannen (“Paradeplatz des Schlosses”) und die zugehörige Musik nun vollständig durchkomponiert war. Die Szene begann mit Treitschkes klangvollem (und politisch radikalem) neuen Text für die Eröffnungsansprache des Ministers: “Des besten Königs Wink und Wille/führt mich zu euch, ihr Armen, her,/.../Es sucht der Bruder seine Brüder,/und kann er helfen, hilft er gern”. Mit seinen unmißverständlichen Anklängen an den offenen Appell der französischen

Revolutionsversammlung, allen europäischen Nationen zu helfen, ihre Unterdrücker abzuschütteln, muß dieser Text in einem kaiserlichen Wien, das den unmittelbar bevorstehenden Untergang Napoleons feierte, einiges an Reaktionen provoziert haben.

Der neugefaßte *Fidelio* wurde am 23. Mai 1814 mit großem Erfolg am Kärntnertor-Theater uraufgeführt. Unter den Mitwirkenden waren auch die drei Organisatoren, die die Neuinszenierung in Auftrag gegeben hatte; einer von ihnen, Johann Michael Vogl (Pizarro) sollte der bevorzugte Liedinterpret eines jungen Komponisten werden, der sich unter den Zuhörern befand – Franz Schubert. Nicht alle musikalischen Revisionen wurden sofort umgesetzt. Nur zwei Tage vor der Premiere begann Beethoven, an einer neuen Overtüre zu arbeiten (die heute den Titel “Fidelio” trägt und eine natürlichere Überleitung zu der komödiantischen Musik des Eröffnungsduetts bilden sollte); diese konnte erst am zweiten Abend gespielt werden, während am ersten die Overtüre zu *Die Ruinen von Athen* erklang. Roccas “Gold”-Arie (“If you don’t save up your money” – “Hat man nicht auch Gold beineben”), die 1806 gestrichen worden war, wurde am 18. Juli wieder in die Oper eingegliedert – an dem Tag, an dem Leonores

großer Monolog aus dem Ersten Akt zum ersten Mal erklang (“Vile murderer!... Come hope, you faint and distant star” – “Abscheulicher! Wo eilst du hin” ... “Komm, Hoffnung, laß den letzten Stern”), mit dem von Treitschke teilweise neugefaßten Rezitativtext, der sich wahrscheinlich an der Parallelnummer in Mayers *Léonore*-Oper orientierte. Gesungen wurde er von der Sopranistin Anna Milder, der Haydn einmal anlässlich eines Vorsingens das Kompliment gezollt hatte, “Meine Liebe, Sie haben eine Stimme wie ein Haus.” Milder hatte Beethoven mitgeteilt, daß sie die erste Fassung ihrer Szene als einen “harten Kampf” empfunden habe, “häßlich, unsäglich und feindselig”; sie war die einzige Sängerin, die an allen drei Premieren der Oper mitwirkte, und sollte später die Sopranrolle in der Neunten Sinfonie realisieren.

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Die Handlung

Der Schauplatz der Oper ist ein Gefängnis in Spanien, wo Florestan von dem Gouverneur Pizarro eingekerkert worden ist, da er diesen der Korruption bezichtigt hat. Florestans Frau,

Leonore, sucht ihn seit seinem Verschwinden vor zwei Jahren. Nun hat sie sich, als Mann verkleidet und unter dem Namen Fidelio, als Gehilfe von Rocco dem Gefängniswärter Zugang zum Gefängnis verschafft.

COMPACT DISC ONE

Erster Akt

Szene 1

Roccas Haus

[1] – [2] Jaquino, der Gefängnisführer, versucht, Roccas Tochter Marzellina dazu zu bewegen, seinen Heiratsantrag anzunehmen, doch sie weigert sich, weil sie sich in Fidelio verliebt hat.

[3] Rocco und die verkleidete Leonore erscheinen; Leonore ist bekümmert darüber, daß sie nicht nur unbeabsichtigt Jaquino der Zuneigung Marzellinas beraubt hat, sondern daß Rocco jetzt auch noch die Wahl seiner Tochter befürwortet. [4] Die vier Figuren bringen ihre jeweiligen Reaktionen auf diese jüngste Entwicklung zum Ausdruck, [5] woraufhin Rocco dem jungen Paar den Rat gibt, Geld zu sparen, wenn sie eine glückliche Ehe führen möchten.

[6] Leonore bittet um Erlaubnis, Rocco bei seiner Arbeit in den unteren Verliesen des

Gefängnisses zu helfen, und schließt aus seiner Antwort, daß einer der Gefangenen ihr Ehemann Florestan sein könnte.

Szene 2

Der Gefängnishof

[7] Pizarro erfährt, daß der Staatsminister Don Fernando eine überraschende Inspektion des Gefängnisses plant, nachdem er von Pizarros Übeltaten erfahren hat. [8] Er beschließt daraufhin, sich Florestans unverzüglich zu entledigen und befiehlt, daß Wachen und ein Trompeter auf dem Wachturm postiert werden, die ihn beim Auftauchen des Ministers warnen sollen.

[9] Rocco lehnt es ab, sich bestechen zu lassen, einen Mord zu begehen, willigt aber schließlich ein, für die Beseitigung der Leiche ein Grab auszuheben; Pizarro wird Florestan selber töten. [10] – [11] Als sie sich entfernen, bricht Leonore in einen Wortschwall der Entrüstung aus und beteuert leidenschaftlich ihre Liebe zu ihrem Mann. [12] Später überredet sie Rocco, einige der Gefangenen für eine Weile ans Sonnenlicht herauszulassen. [13] – [14] Als diese sich in Luft und Licht ergehen, sagt Rocco nun, er sei nicht in der Lage, das Grab ganz allein zu schaufeln, und erbittet Leonores Hilfe. [15] – [16] Als sie

begreift, daß es sich bei dem Gefangenen um Florestan handeln könnte, wird Leonore von ihren Gefühlen überwältigt. [17] – [18] Pizarro kehrt zurück, schickt verärgert die Gefangenen in ihre Zellen zurück und drängt den zögernden Rocco in das Verlies hinunter.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Zweiter Akt

Szene 1

Ein Verlies im Gefängnis

[1] – [2] Florestan, in Einzelhaft und an die Wand gekettet, denkt über sein schreckliches Schicksal nach; [3] dann plötzlich sieht er in einer ekstatischen Vision Leonore in der Gestalt eines Engels, der ihn in die Freiheit hinaus führt. Er bricht erschöpft zusammen. [4] Rocco und Leonore steigen in die Zelle hinunter, um das Grab auszuheben. [5] – [7] Leonore erkennt Florestans Stimme. Rocco, der für das Leiden des Gefangenen Mitleid empfindet, gibt ihm ein wenig Wein, während Leonore ihm ein Stück Brot zusteckt. Sie beginnt, sein Grab zu schaufeln.

Rocco gibt das Signal, daß alles bereit ist. Pizarro zieht einen Degen, beugt sich hämisch über sein Opfer und will Florestan gerade erdolchen, als Leonore hervorstürzt und ihm

den Weg versperrt. Zur Verwunderung der drei Männer gibt sie sich als Florestans Frau zu erkennen, und als Pizarro auch sie bedroht, zieht sie eine Pistole.

Eine Trompete kündigt die Ankunft des Ministers an. Rocco ruft nach Licht, um Pizarro hinaufzubegleiten, ihn zu begrüßen, doch Pizarro eilt hinweg. [8] Leonore und Florestan sind wieder vereint.

Szene 2

Vor dem Gefängnis

[9] – [10] Die Bürger jubeln dem Minister zu, der gekommen ist, um sicherzugehen, daß königliche Gerechtigkeit walte. Er ist überrascht zu erfahren, daß Florestan von Pizarro eingekerkert wurde. Er verhaftet Pizarro und gibt Leonore die Schlüssel, um die Ketten ihres Mannes zu lösen. [11] – [12] Florestan und das Volk singen ein Loblied auf Leonore.

Übersetzung: Stephanie Wollny

Die amerikanische Sopranistin **Christine Brewer** stammt aus Illinois und begann ihre künstlerische Laufbahn am Opera Theatre von Saint Louis, wo sie die Ellen Orford und Donna Anna sowie die Titelrollen in *Ariadne auf Naxos* und Haydns *Armida* gesungen hat.

Weitere Auftritte hatte sie als Gräfin Almaviva an der New York City Opera und der Royal Opera in Covent Garden sowie als Donna Anna auf dem Edinburgh Festival unter Sir Charles Mackerras und in London, New York und Florida. Sie hat Glucks *Iphigenie en Tauride* in Madrid gesungen, Leonore (*Fidelio*) mit dem St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Webers *Oberon* unter Richard Hickox in London und Strauss' *Die Ägyptische Helena* in Santa Fe. Ihre erste Isolde sang sie mit dem BBC Symphony Orchestra unter Donald Runnicles, sodann Brittens *Gloriana* unter Richard Hickox auf dem Aldeburgh Festival und Chrysothemis (*Elektra*) mit dem Cleveland Orchestra unter Frans Welser-Möst. Für ihre Darbietung in *Ariadne auf Naxos* erlangte sie internationalen Ruhm; inzwischen hat sie die Rolle an der English National Opera, der Opéra de Lyon (in Lyon und Paris), auf dem Santa Fe Festival und bei ihrem Debüt an der Metropolitan Opera unter James Levine gesungen.

Auf dem Konzertpodium tritt Christine Brewer mit den großen amerikanischen und britischen Orchestern unter Sir Roger Norrington, Michael Tilson-Thomas, Kurt Masur, John Adams, Christoph von Dohnányi, Raymond Leppard, Mark Wigglesworth, Andrew Litton, John Nelson, Sir Neville

Marriner, Wolfgang Sawallisch und Ivan Fischer auf. Ihre Diskographie umfaßt Janáčeks *Glagolitische Messe* und Dvořáks *Te Deum* mit Robert Shaw, *Don Giovanni* unter Sir Charles Mackerras und Barbers *Vanessa* unter Leonard Slatkin; außerdem wirkt sie an Graham Johnsons Schubert-Gesamteinspielung mit.

Konzertverpflichtungen umfaßten in jüngerer Zeit die Galakonzerte am Royal Opera House in Covent Garden (unter Bernard Haitink) und Dallapiccolas *Il Prigioniero* an La Monnaie in Brüssel (unter Antonio Pappano); außerdem hat sie enge Verbindungen zu den BBC Proms geknüpft, mit Aufführungen unter anderem von Brittens *War Requiem* unter Jane Glover, Janáčeks *Glagolitischer Messe* unter Sir Andrew Davis, Wagners *Walküre* und Schönbergs *Gurreliedern* unter Donald Runnicles sowie Mahlers Achter Sinfonie unter Sir Simon Rattle.

Der kanadische Tenor **Richard Margison** ist heute auf dem internationalen Podium einer der von der Kritik am enthusiastischsten gefeierten Sänger und hatte Auftritte an vielen der weltweit führenden Opernhäuser, darunter die Metropolitan Opera, die Wiener Staatsoper, die Deutsche Oper Berlin, die San Francisco Opera, das Théâtre royal de la

Monnaie in Brüssel, Covent Garden, die Sydney Opera und die Niederländische Oper.

Seine bisherigen Rollen umfassen Pollione (Bellinis *Norma*) in Washington, Calaf (*Turandot*) mit der Canadian Opera Company in Toronto und für die Royal Opera, Dick Johnson (*La fanciulla del West*) in Seattle, Bacchus (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) für die Royal Opera, *Un ballo in maschera* an der Sydney Opera, Manrico (*Il trovatore*), Radamès, Calaf und Bacchus an der Metropolitan Opera in New York, Florestan (*Fidelio*) für die Seattle Opera, Radamès und Manrico für die San Francisco Opera sowie konzertante Aufführungen von *La gioconda* an der Carnegie Hall und *Fidelio* mit der Vancouver Symphony.

Als gefragter Konzertsänger hat Richard Margison mit dem Londoner Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, dem Philadelphia Orchestra, der San Francisco Symphony, den Sinfonieorchestern von Montreal und Toronto, dem National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa und auf dem Ravinia Festival gesungen.

Seine Diskographie umfaßt *Lanza*, den Soundtrack für einen Film über das Leben von Mario Lanza, in dem er die Titelrolle singt, Verdis *Don Carlos* mit dem Chor und Orchester des Royal Opera House unter

Bernard Haitink, Tchaikowskys *Mazeppa* mit dem Göteborger Sinfonieorchester unter der Leitung von Neeme Järvi sowie drei Einspielungen mit Richard Bradshaw und dem Canadian Opera Company Orchestra – ein Soloalbum mit dem Titel *French and Italian Arias, Rarities by Rossini and Verdi* mit Gary Relya und *Aria, une sélection de Radio-Canada* mit Anita Krause, Wendy Nielson und Gary Relya. Richard Margison wurde 2001 mit dem Titel eines Officer of the Order of Canada ausgezeichnet.

Robert Lloyd wurde in der Grafschaft Essex geboren und studierte an der Oxford University. Er begann sein Berufsleben als Historiker, bevor er sich einer Gesangslaufbahn zuwandte. 1972 wurde er am Royal Opera House in Covent Garden als Erster Baß verpflichtet und hat dort seither ein äußerst vielfältiges Repertoire gesungen.

1983 sang er als erster britischer Baß am Royal Opera House in Covent Garden die Titelrolle in Mussorgskys *Boris Godunov*. Weitere Auftritte führten ihn an die Mailänder Scala (*Der fliegende Holländer* und *Parsifal*), die San Francisco Opera (*Don Carlos* und *L'incoronazione di Poppea*), die Chicago Lyric Opera (*Simon Boccanegra*), die Deutsche Oper

Berlin (*Tristan und Isolde*), die Niederländische Oper (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* und *Parsifal*) und auf das Salzburger Festival (*Pelléas et Mélisande* und *Les Troyens*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Die Zauberflöte* und *Don Giovanni*). Seine zahlreichen Auftritte an der Metropolitan Opera in New York umfassen *Rigoletto*, *Parsifal*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Les Troyens*, *Fidelio*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* und *Benvenuto Cellini*, während er für die Royal Opera in *Simon Boccanegra*, *Don Giovanni*, *Parsifal* und *Aida* sowie in der *Zauberflöte*, *La fanciulla del West*, *Le nozze di Figaro* und *Turandot* gesungen hat.

Im Konzert ist Robert Lloyd mit dem Cleveland Orchestra unter von Dohnányi, dem Philadelphia Orchestra unter Jansons, dem London Philharmonic Orchestra unter Haitink und dem Boston Symphony Orchestra unter Frühbecke de Burgos aufgetreten. Mit dem London Symphony Orchestra unter Sir Colin Davis hat er die Rolle des Bottom (*Ein Sommernachtstraum*) gesungen und aufgenommen, außerdem hat er an der Berlioz-Odyssee im Konzertsaal des Londoner Barbican mitgewirkt.

Robert Lloyd war an mehreren überaus erfolgreichen TV-Produktionen beteiligt und

wirkte an einer Fernsehaufzeichnung von *Ritter Blaubarts Burg* mit, die mit dem Fernsehpreis der Royal Philharmonic Society ausgezeichnet wurde. Er hat eine beeindruckende Diskographie von mehr als siebzig Audio- und Video-Einspielungen und wurde in der New Year's Honours List von 1991 mit dem Titel eines Commander of the British Empire ausgezeichnet.

Rebecca Evans wurde in Pontrhydyfen (Südwalles) geboren und studierte an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Sie nahm am Förderprogramm für Nachwuchssänger der Welsh National Opera teil und wurde von der Peter Moores Foundation in ihrem Studium bei Ronald Schneider in Wien unterstützt. Als Opernsängerin hat sie besonders in Amerika viel Beachtung gefunden, so etwa als Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) an der Santa Fe Opera und beim Ravinia Festival, Adele (*Die Fledermaus*) an der Chicago Lyric Opera, Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Ann Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) und Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) an der San Francisco Opera sowie Susanna und Zerlina an der Metropolitan Opera New York.

In Europa gastiert sie regelmäßig an der Bayerischen Staatsoper, wo sie Susanna, Sophie

(*Der Rosenkavalier*), Zdenka (*Arabella*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*) und unlängst Nanetta (*Falstaff*) unter der Leitung von Zubin Mehta gesungen hat. Weitere Rollen waren Ilia an der Nederlandse Opera und Opéra de Lausanne, die Titelrolle in *Das schlaue Fuchslein* an der Scottish Opera, Susanna, Ilia, Marzelline (*Fidelio*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*) und Héro (*Béatrice et Bénédict*) an der Welsh National Opera, Romilda (*Xerxes*) an der English National Opera sowie Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) mit Sir Charles Mackerras, Zerlina, Nanetta und Johanna (*Sweeney Todd*) an der Royal Opera Covent Garden.

Zu ihren umfangreichen Konzertverpflichtungen gehören die BBC Proms und die Edinburgher Festspiele. Sie hat Bachs *Magnificat* mit dem San Francisco Symphony Orchestra und Michael Tilson Thomas und das *Requiem* von Brahms mit dem Boston Symphony Orchestra und Jeffrey Tate beim Tanglewood Festival.

Neben zahlreichen anderen Schallplatten hat Rebecca Evans Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) mit Sir Charles Mackerras, Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*) und Marzelline (*Fidelio*) für die Chandos-Serie "Opera in English", Nanetta (*Falstaff*) mit Sir John Eliot Gardiner, eine Reihe von Gilbert-und-

Sullivan-Aufnahmen mit Sir Charles Mackerras und eine Solo-CD mit italienischen Liedern aufgenommen.

Peter Wedd studierte an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama bei William McAlpine und anschließend am National Opera Studio. Er war von 1999 bis 2001 erster Tenor an der Royal Opera Covent Garden und gastiert regelmäßig an der Welsh National Opera. Als erster Tenor an der Royal Opera sang er Ywain (*Gawain and the Green Knight*) und Kudrjás (*Kat'a Kabanová*), und er hat auch als Borsa (*Rigoletto*) gastiert. An der Welsh National Opera ist er als Don José (*Carmen*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) und Laça Klemen (*Jenůfa*) aufgetreten.

Weitere Verpflichtungen waren Federico (*L'arlesiana*) und Pluto (*Orphée aux enfers*) mit der Opera Holland Park, Kyska (*Šarkatán*) und Julius (*I cavalieri di Ekebù*) beim Wexford Festival sowie Satyavan (*Savitri*) beim Aldeburgh Festival. Außerdem hatte er großen Erfolg als Rodolfo (*La bohème*) in der Royal Albert Hall London, und Tamino mit Glyndebourne on Tour. Er hat Tamino und Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*) mit der Europäischen Kammeroper sowie Lysander

(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) am Lyric Theatre Singapur gesungen.

Als vielgefragter Konzertkünstler ist er u.a. mit dem London Philharmonic Orchestra und dem Royal Scottish National Orchestra, der City of London Sinfonia und der Northern Sinfonia sowie dem Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra aufgetreten. Peter Wedd hat bei Festspielen wie in Covent Garden und Edinburgh, Maribor (Slowenien) und Cernier (Schweiz) gesungen.

Für die Chandos-Serie "Opera in English" hat er *Turandot*, *Jenůfa* und *Der fliegende Holländer* aufgenommen.

Pavlo Hunka, der Sohn eines ukrainischen Vaters und einer englischen Mutter, wurde in England geboren; er qualifizierte sich zunächst als Linguist und arbeitete als Jurist, bevor er sich einer Karriere als Sänger zuwandte. Er begann seine Gesangsstudien am Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester und vollendete sie in der Schweiz bei der Kammersängerin Maria Sandulescu.

Während eines dreijährigen Engagements in Basel sang er viele der großen Rollen des Repertoires für Baßbariton. Seither hatte er Auftritte an den meisten führenden Opernhäusern der Welt, unter anderem in

Paris, Wien, München, Florenz, Amsterdam, London und Salzburg. Er hat unter Claudio Abbado, Jeffrey Tate, Semion Bychkov, Zubin Mehta, Peter Schneider, Mark Wigglesworth und anderen gesungen.

Pavlo Hunkas Repertoire umfaßt den Barak (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), die Titelrolle in *Wozzeck*, Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Blaubart (*Ritter Blaubarts Burg*), Pizarro (*Fidelio*), Kaspar (*Der Freischütz*), die Titelrolle in *Der fliegende Holländer*, Lysiart (*Euryanthe*) sowie zahlreiche Rollen für Baßbariton im russischen, Wagnerschen und italienischen Repertoire.

Höhepunkte der letzten Spielzeiten waren Shaklovity (*Khovanshchina*) und *The Capture of Troy* an der English National Opera, Zunbeltz in Bilbao, Dr. Schön/Jack (*Lulu*) an der Bonner Oper, die Titelrolle in *Falstaff*, Alberich (*Siegfried*) sowie Hunding (*Die Walküre*) an der Canadian Opera in Toronto, Tomski (*Pique Dame*) am Teatro Real in Madrid und Siskov (*From the House of the Dead*) an der Genfer Oper.

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

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

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

Auf seinem Konzertprogramm standen Mozarts Messe C-Dur in Aix-en-Provence mit The Sixteen, Strawinskys *Les Noces* mit Philippe Herreweghe in Brüssel, Monteverdis *Vespro* della Beate Vergine mit Richard Hickox, John Taveners *Apocalypse* bei den Proms mit der City of London Sinfonia, die *Johannespassion* mit Paul Goodwin in Madrid, *Messiah* mit dem Scottish Chamber Orchestra, *Les Mamelles de Térésias* mit der London Sinfonietta unter Sir Simon Rattle, Britten's

War Requiem und Haydns *Schöpfung* mit dem Ulster Orchestra, *Belshazzar's Feast* mit der English Northern Sinfonia unter Paul Daniel sowie Lucifer in Händels *La Resurrezione* für Paul McCreesh.

Christopher Purves gab sein Solodebüt beim Aldeburgh Festival im Juni 2004. Für die Chandos-Serie "Opera in English" hat er die Titelrolle in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Gottardo (*La gazza ladra*) und *Die Zauberflöte* aufgenommen.

Ashley Catling studierte an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama bei William McAlpine sowie am National Opera Studio, unterstützt von einem Stipendium der Friends of Covent Garden und einem Nelly Groner Bursary. Zu seinen bisherigen Opernrollen zählen Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Fenton (*Falstaff*) und eine Rolle als Mitglied des Männerchors in *The Rape of Lucretia*.

Auf dem Konzertpodium ist Ashley Catling in der Barbican Concert Hall, den Royal Glasgow Concert Halls und der Queen Elizabeth Hall, in St. John Smith Square und in St. Martin in the Fields aufgetreten. Zu seinen Engagements in jüngerer Zeit zählen die *Matthäus-Passion* in der Winchester

Cathedral, ein Recital mit Liedern für Vokalstimme und Harfe von Benjamin Britten in Aldeburgh sowie Tourneen in Europa und den USA, auf denen Steve Reichs neue Video-Oper *Three Tales* gemeinsam mit dem Komponisten aufgeführt und eingespielt wurde.

Aufführungen umfassen *The Stargazer*, ein neues Auftragswerk der London Mozart Players für Tenor solo und Sinfonieorchester von Lynne Plowman, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) mit Opera by Definition, *Die Fledermaus* am Dubliner Grand Opera House, Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) an der Opera Holland Park, John Millar Junior in David Hornes *Friend of the People* an der Scottish Opera, Gawain in der Welturaufführung von Lynne Plowmans Oper *Gawain and the Green Knight* mit dem Music Theatre Wales sowie Tamino (*The Little Magic Flute*) an der Opera North. Einspielungen umfassen *Contrabandista*, und *L'Esule di Granata* für Opera Rara.

Das **Philharmonia Orchestra**, eines der großen Orchester der Welt, steht nun bereits im sechsten Jahr unter der Leitung seines berühmten deutschen Chefdirigenten Christoph von Dohnányi. Er setzt eine

Tradition fort, die mit Otto Klemperer begann und über Lorin Maazel (Erster Gastdirigent), Riccardo Muti (Chefdirigent und Musikalischer Leiter), Giuseppe Sinopoli (Musikalischer Leiter) bis zu Kurt Sanderling (Emeritierter Dirigent), Vladimir Ashkenazy (Ehrendirigent) und Sir Charles Mackerras (Hauptgastdirigent) führt, aber auch die Zusammenarbeit mit Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan und Carlo Maria Giulini einbezog. Das Orchester verpflichtet weiterhin Gastdirigenten und Solisten von Weltrang, während einige der größten europäischen Nachwuchstalente in seine Reihen aufgenommen werden.

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

die in ihrem Kern der Bestellung und Darbietung neuer Musik von führenden Komponisten unserer Zeit verpflichtet ist.

Die Konzerte des Orchesters werden immer häufiger von BBC Radio 3 übertragen, nicht zuletzt im Rahmen der jährlichen BBC Proms. Mit über 1000 Schallplattenaufnahmen verfügt das Philharmonia Orchestra über die größte Orchesterdiskographie der Welt, die auch Fernseh- und Filmmusik beinhaltet, und genießt weltweit höchstes Ansehen. Das Orchester hat für Opera Rara mehrere Recitals sowie elf komplette Opern eingespielt und in der Reihe "Opera in English" für Chandos mit Unterstützung durch die Peter Moores Foundation *The Thieving Magpie*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Turandot*, die preisgekrönte *Tosca* und Opernarien in Solorecitals mit Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny und John Tomlinson aufgenommen. Das Philharmonia Orchestra untermauert seinen internationalen Rang durch regelmäßige Tourneen und Gastauftritte an berühmten Häusern wie dem Châtelet Théâtre Musical in Paris, dem Megaron in Athen und dem Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York.

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.

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

Gründungsmitglied und Direktor der Almeida Opera.

Er übt in Großbritannien und international eine weitgespannte Tätigkeit in den Bereichen Oper und Konzert aus, hat mehrere Produktionen der English National Opera und der Opera North dirigiert und tritt regelmäßig mit dem Philharmonia Orchestra und dem London Philharmonic Orchestra auf. 1996 gab er sein Debüt beim Glyndebourne Festival mit *Così fan tutte* und hat dort 1998 die Uraufführung von Jonathan Doves *Flight* geleitet.

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

Israeli Opera und *Don Giovanni* an der Staatsoper Hannover.

Seine Tätigkeit im Aufnahmestudio umfaßt die Produktion von Marschners *Der Vampyr* fürs BBC-Fernsehen und achtundzwanzig vollständige Opernaufzeichnungen unter der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation. Darunter befinden sich zahlreiche Aufnahmen der Reihe Opera Rara, die mehrere Preise gewonnen haben, beispielsweise den belgischen Prix Cecilia für Donizettis *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*. Für Chandos hat er die Aufzeichnung einer Serie von Programmen mit Opernarien geleitet (mit Sir Thoms Allen, Bruce Ford, Alan Opie, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Barry Banks, 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 Burda/ArenaPal

Monte Pederson as Don Pizarro and Robert Lloyd as Rocco in The Royal Opera's production of *Fidelio*

Un opéra unique

“*Fidelio*”, écrivait Thomas Love Peacock à l’époque des premières représentations londoniennes de l’ouvrage,

associe l’harmonie la plus profonde à des mélodies parlant à l’âme. L’enjouement des espoirs juvéniles, l’héroïsme d’un amour fervent, la rage du tyran, le désespoir du prisonnier, le soudain éclat du soleil de la liberté triomphant de l’obscurité du cachot [...] sont représentés avec une puissance et un réalisme qui font de la musique un langage intelligible, possédant un pouvoir illimité d’épancher la pensée sous forme sonore.

L’histoire de la genèse de cet “opéra entre les opéras” (Gustav Mahler), “unique, à la fois en nombre et en qualité” (Otto Klemperer), est riche de contradictions intrigantes. Ce fut, de fait, la seule œuvre pour la scène lyrique achevée par Beethoven, bien qu’il ait passé des périodes significatives de sa vie en contact avec les théâtres lyriques et les créateurs d’opéras, et à la recherche de livrets adaptés. Peu d’opéras ont un parti pris politique aussi clair – la victoire du libéralisme sur une tyrannie réactionnaire injuste – ou s’identifient aussi étroitement à un événement historique précis

– la prise de la Bastille pendant la Révolution de 1789 –, et il est donc étonnant d’apprendre que son livret fut vaguement basé sur une histoire de sauvetage inspirée d’un fait réel, où un aristocrate fut tiré de prison par des révolutionnaires de gauche. De plus, alors que l’opéra, tel qu’il est aujourd’hui largement représenté (et tel qu’il est enregistré ici), semble être une composition aussi claire et inévitable que n’importe quelle autre partition majeure de Beethoven, il fut en fait le fruit de plus de dix ans de travail incluant quatre (presque cinq) ouvertures, trois versions musicales et trois révisions substantielles du livret.

Dans ce qui était alors la petite ville de province allemande de Bonn, le père de Beethoven était ténor, et le jeune futur compositeur ne tarda pas à s’impliquer dans l’orchestre du théâtre de la Cour local, jouant du clavecin en public à l’âge de douze et treize ans. Par la suite, après un premier voyage à Vienne au cours duquel il prit une ou deux leçons avec Mozart, Beethoven retourna chez lui pour y mener la vie d’un musicien d’orchestre au cachet. Altiste du rang pendant

quatre saisons et demie, il eut une expérience directe du répertoire lyrique léger de l’époque: ouvrages allemands et français dans lesquels les numéros chantés alternaient avec des dialogues parlés – composés par des musiciens comme Grétry ou Dittersdorf –, *opera buffa* italien de Cimarosa ou Paisiello, quelques œuvres de Gluck et trois opéras de Mozart. L’influence de ces compositions sur Beethoven s’entend dès son Deuxième (en réalité, Premier) Concerto pour piano, dans lequel le piano apparaît comme une sorte de soliste vocal au milieu d’“arias” et de “récitatifs” orchestraux, mais elle détermine aussi, et de manière sans doute plus importante, sa conception du texte dramatique (qu’il soit parlé ou sous forme de récitatif) comme élément essentiel d’un opéra réussi. Ainsi les opéras qu’il admirait le plus – et sur lesquels il basa ses premières tentatives – étaient-ils *La Flûte enchantée* de Mozart et les ouvrages français de Cherubini, *Lodoïska*, *Les Deux Journées* et *Médée*.

La première composition lyrique de Beethoven consista en airs supplémentaires pour un opéra comique allemand existant (*Die schöne Schusterin* d’Umlauf) mais, étant donné son admiration pour *La Flûte enchantée* et (à partir de 1792) sa présence à Vienne, il était presque inévitable que son premier projet

d’opéra proprement dit soit une collaboration avec Emanuel Schikaneder, l’acteur et directeur de théâtre qui avait écrit le livret du dernier ouvrage de Mozart. Schikaneder lui proposa *Vestas Feuer*, une histoire de vestales de la Rome antique qui parlaient (comme le fit observer Beethoven) “un langage et des vers tels qu’ils ne pouvaient sortir que de la bouche de nos marchandes des quatre-saisons viennoises”. Dès le début de 1804, Beethoven s’était lassé de ce texte, écrivant à un ami que “l’empire [de Schikaneder] a réellement été entièrement éclipsé par l’éclat des brillants et séduisants opéras français”. Il faisait référence à la fois à ceux qu’il avait entendus à Bonn et au succès local de Cherubini qui, à la fin 1803, avait vu monter à Vienne six de ses opéras récents en moins de deux ans. La capitale autrichienne accueillit ensuite des œuvres de Gaveau, Méhul et Spontini (notamment *La Vestale*). Inspiré par cette nouvelle invasion, Beethoven nota: “J’ai aussitôt fait adapter un vieux livret français et y travaille à présent.” Il s’agissait de *Léonore, ou l’amour conjugal* de Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, un ouvrage comprenant de nombreux épisodes musicaux, composés par Pierre Gaveau à l’origine.

Le travail pour transformer la *Léonore* française en un *Fidelio* allemand satisfaisant

allait occuper Beethoven par intermittences pendant les dix années suivantes. Mais sa recherche de nouveaux livrets, aussi bien pendant cette décennie que dans la suite de sa carrière, fut presque digne de Puccini de par son insistance. Parmi les projets envisageables figurèrent une *Macbeth* par l'auteur du *Coriolan* pour lequel il avait écrit une ouverture, des *Ruines de Babylone* de Treitschke (qui serait plus tard le troisième librettiste de *Fidelio*), *Le Retour d'Ulysse*, *Romulus et Remus*, et *Bacchus*. À l'été 1811, à peu près à l'époque où il composa la Septième Symphonie, Beethoven déclara à un correspondant : "Il est très difficile de trouver un bon livret d'opéra. Depuis l'année dernière, j'en ai refusé pas moins de douze ou plus." Alors qu'il devait écrire de nombreuses œuvres pour voix et orchestre, la seule musique véritablement opératique qui survit de ces tentatives avortées consiste en deux finales pour deux *pasticcios* de la plume de Treitschke.

Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, l'auteur de *Léonore*, fut avocat et juge au service de diverses administrations françaises avant et pendant la Révolution. Il raconta, dans des mémoires publiés plus de quarante ans plus tard, qu'alors qu'il était administrateur en Touraine pendant la période jacobine des années 1790, il était

venu en aide à une dame de la noblesse, Madame de La Valette, qui tentait de sauver son mari aristocrate de la guillotine, "événements historiques réels" qui (dit-il) inspirèrent le drame de *Léonore*. L'ouvrage scénique de Bouilly et Gaveau fut créé à Paris en février 1798 au Théâtre Feydeau, dont la compagnie indubitablement hors pair de chanteurs/acteurs était aussi apte à réciter les dialogues en distiques héroïques qu'à chanter l'opéra. (Détail de bon augure, un an auparavant, le premier Florestan – le compositeur Gaveau lui-même – et la première Léonore – Julie-Angélique Scio – avaient créé les rôles de Jason et de Médée dans la *Médée* de Cherubini.) Ainsi, les dialogues parlés, favorisés de toute façon par Beethoven et qui devaient s'avérer être un tremplin si important dans *Fidelio* entre les numéros vocaux et instrumentaux de l'opéra, faisaient dès le départ partie intégrante de sa source, *Léonore*. Un autre épisode de ces mémoires romancés de la carrière de Bouilly, décrivant à nouveau la loyauté infatigable d'une épouse envers son mari injustement emprisonné, inspira son livret *Les Deux Journées* pour un opéra de Cherubini, en 1800, qui remporta un vif succès à Vienne peu de temps après et qui exerça une importante influence musicale et

dramatique sur Beethoven alors qu'il travaillait à *Léonore*.

Les sujets de Bouilly étaient très accessibles dans leur caractérisation sans ambages du bien et du mal, représentés par des personnes et des situations qui semblaient brutalement contemporaines comparées aux récits tirés de la mythologie classique qui avaient dominé le théâtre du XVIII^e siècle. Dans *Léonore*, les noms de tous les personnages disaient quelque chose de leur caractère ou de leur statut social et politique. Roc (Rocco chez Beethoven) est "ferme comme le roc", insensible à tout (sauf à l'argent). Fidelio vient de fidelis en latin : fidèle, loyal, fiable, toutes les qualités de Léonore au cours de la mission qu'elle entreprend incognito pour sauver son mari. Dom Pizare (Pizarro chez Beethoven) renvoie à l'abus du pouvoir royal par les conquistadors espagnols durant leur conquête brutale du Nouveau Monde. Le couple "commun", ou "comique", porte des prénoms typiques de serviteurs : Jaquino ("petit Jacques") et Marceline/Marzellina ("petite Marie"). Grâce à ses liens véristes avec les récents événements de la Révolution – et rendue plus acceptable du fait qu'elle contenait une histoire morale louant la force du mariage –, la *Léonore* de Bouilly devint un sujet très recherché dans

l'Europe lyrique. Après Gaveau, elle fut mise en musique, en l'espace de quelques années, non seulement par Beethoven, dont la première version atteignit la scène viennoise en novembre 1805, mais aussi par Ferdinando Paer (Dresde, 1804) et par Simone Mayr (Padoue, 1805).

Beethoven souhaita toujours intituler son opéra *Léonore*, d'après le nom réel de l'héroïne, plutôt que *Fidelio* (préféré par les directeurs de théâtre et les éditeurs pour distinguer son opéra des *Léonore* d'autres compositeurs) d'après le nom masculin qu'elle adopte pour se faire embaucher à la prison d'État. L'opéra fut donné tout d'abord en trois actes, les deux premiers correspondant à l'actuel acte I. L'acte III original ne comportait aucun changement de décor : la visite du ministre, Don Fernando, et la libération de Florestan se déroulaient dans le cachot où celui-ci avait été emprisonné. Le livret fut préparé par Joseph Ferdinand von Sonnleithner, secrétaire du Théâtre impérial et l'un des fondateurs de la célèbre société de concerts de la ville, la Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. Il basa son travail sur une traduction littérale de Bouilly, reprenant aussi toutes les occasions de mise en musique qu'offrait le livret français et en créant d'autres, en consultation avec Beethoven, à partir des

possibilités présentées par les dialogues français. Ces nouveaux passages musicaux incluaient le célèbre Quatuor de l'acte I ("Quel sentiment étrange" – "A wonder clear and pure") et toute la musique de Pizarro, y compris son premier grand air de la vengeance ("Ah! quel instant que celui-ci!" – "Ah, this ecstasy") et le Quatuor du cachot ("Qu'il meure!" – "You perish!") – dans l'œuvre de Bouilly et Gaveau, le rôle de Pizarro (Dom Pizare) était parlé.

Dans cette première version de la partition, pratiquement tous les grands passages musicaux étaient en place, bien que sous une forme légèrement plus développée ou différente mélodiquement. (Certains commentateurs regrettent la disparition, en 1814, de l'introduction en récitatif accompagné et de la version plus longue et plus ornementée du duo entre Florestan et Léonore, "Oh! c'est une indicible joie!" – "Oh joy beyond all understanding") Elle comportait aussi trois numéros qui, peut-on dire a posteriori, retardaient l'action (et le flux musical) et qui furent heureusement coupés en 1814. Deux – un trio comique entre Rocco, Marceline et Jaquino, et un duo entre Marceline et Léonore – se rapportaient à l'intrigue secondaire de l'opéra, le projet de

mariage entre la fille de Rocco, Marceline, et le nouvel apprenti du père, "Fidelio"; le troisième était un second air de vengeance de Pizarro par lequel se terminait l'acte II original.

La création de l'œuvre, le 20 novembre 1805 au Theater an der Wien de Vienne, lieu de naissance également de *La Flûte enchantée*, ne fut pas un succès public. Une partie du public viennois attendu s'était enfuie devant l'invasion des troupes napoléoniennes, qui occupèrent dès lors les fauteuils du théâtre mais qui ne reconnurent pas le nouveau rejeton lyrique de ce véritable enfant de leur patrie. Des amis plus intéressés persuadèrent Beethoven, contre son gré, que son œuvre était trop longue, et Stephan von Breuning, collègue du compositeur depuis l'époque où il vivait à Bonn, révisa le livret de Sonnleithner. Les trois actes furent condensés en deux (selon le plan actuel), une grande partie du dialogue et pratiquement tous les numéros musicaux furent raccourcis – certains, comme le second air de Pizarro, de manière radicale. Beethoven refusa de fortes suggestions de couper les deux numéros relatifs aux fiançailles de Léonore et de Marceline, aussi Breuning les déplaça-t-il dans l'enchaînement de l'acte I. Une deuxième ouverture (aujourd'hui appelée "*Léonore III*") fut composée et jouée à la place de la "*Léonore*

II" de 1805. Les réactions du public et de la presse (mars-avril 1806) furent plus positives, mais Beethoven décida que le bureau de location du théâtre le grugeait et retira sa partition après deux représentations très insuffisamment répétées, semble-t-il.

Depuis l'époque de Beethoven ou presque, des commentateurs au tempérament romantique ont rapproché l'isolation croissante du compositeur suscitée par sa surdité de l'emprisonnement solitaire de Florestan dans son cachot souterrain, comparé les paroles de l'aria ("Aux jours du printemps de la vie, le bonheur a fui loin de moi" – "In the spring of youthful promise I had all my hopes destroyed") avec le cri de désespoir du compositeur concernant sa santé dans le Testament de Heiligenstadt, et identifié Léonore, l'épouse fidèle en toute adversité, à la compagne de vie que Beethoven ne parvint apparemment jamais à trouver. Il semble véritablement peu plausible que Beethoven ait simplement abandonné une œuvre qu'il décrira plus tard comme: "de tous mes enfants, celui dont l'enfantement m'a coûté le plus de douleurs et qui m'a causé le plus grand souci; et de ce fait celui qui m'est le plus cher. Plus que tout autre, je l'estime digne d'être conservé et utilisé pour la science de l'art".

Néanmoins, six ans s'écoulèrent ensuite au cours desquels Beethoven acheva et fit jouer ses Symphonies nos 4 à 8, ainsi qu'une pléiade d'autres compositions importantes, tandis que le projet *Fidelio* semblait dormir, hormis des projets non réalisés de représentations à Berlin et à Prague, ces dernières donnant à Beethoven l'occasion d'écrire une troisième ouverture pour son opéra, aujourd'hui connue sous le nom de "*Léonore I*".

Puis, en 1814, trois chanteurs de l'Opéra de la Cour de Vienne, peut-être influencés par l'immense succès réservé à la *Bataille de Vittoria*, œuvre d'actualité de Beethoven, mais éminemment de circonstance, demandèrent s'ils pouvaient reprendre l'opéra pour des représentations à leur profit au Kärntnertortheater. Beethoven accepta, à la condition de pouvoir apporter des modifications (importantes) à son œuvre, pour lesquelles il s'assura de l'aide de Georg Friedrich Treitschke, poète et régisseur du Théâtre impérial. Les trois numéros récalcitrants qui ralentissaient le drame jusque-là furent supprimés, pratiquement tous les autres numéros subirent des ajustements (le trio de l'acte II, "Soyez récompensés dans les mondes meilleurs" ("In a better world they surely shall applaud you"), et le Quatuor,

“Qu’il meure!” (“You perish!”), furent en fait un peu allongés), et, révolution majeure, les Finales des deux actes furent radicalement réécrits. À la fin de l’acte I, le second air de Pizarro laissa la place à la conclusion émouvante du retour des prisonniers dans leurs cellules (“Adieu, chaude lumière des rayons du soleil!” – “Farewell, the warm and radiant light”), tandis qu’à l’acte II, l’arrivée du ministre et le pardon de Florestan bénéficièrent à la fois d’un nouveau décor à l’air libre et à la lumière (“La place d’armes du château”) et d’une composition musicale complètement continue. La scène commençait avec le nouveau texte marquant (et politiquement radical) attribué par Treitschke au ministre pour son entrée en scène: “Le bon plaisir du meilleur des rois m’amène jusqu’à vous qu’a frappés le malheur. [...] Je ne viens pas ici en tyran insensible. C’est un frère qui cherche à connaître ses frères. S’il peut venir en aide, il le fait de bon gré” – (“My noble sovereign’s will and order”...). Avec ses échos caractéristiques du discours d’ouverture de la Convention révolutionnaire française proposant d’aider toutes les nations d’Europe à se libérer de leurs oppresseurs, ce texte dut susciter des commentaires dans une Vienne impériale célébrant la chute imminente de Napoléon.

Fidelio ainsi remanié fut créé avec un grand succès le 23 mai 1814 au Kärntnertortheater. La distribution comprenait les trois bénéficiaires commanditaires de cette reprise, dont l’un, Johann Michael Vogl (Pizarro) devait devenir l’interprète de lieder favori d’un jeune compositeur présent parmi le public, Franz Schubert. Toutes les révisions musicales ne furent pas intégrées d’emblée. Une nouvelle ouverture (aujourd’hui appelée “Fidelio”, et conçue pour mener plus naturellement à la musique d’opéra comique du duo initial) ne fut ébauchée par Beethoven que deux jours avant la première et ne put être jouée que le deuxième soir; l’ouverture des *Ruines d’Athènes* fut jouée lors de la première. L’air “de l’or” de Rocco (“Si l’on n’a pas de l’or aussi” – “If you don’t save up your money”), coupé en 1806, fut réintégré le 18 juillet, jour où l’on entendit pour la première fois le grand monologue de l’acte I de Léonore (“Ah! monstre abominable... Oh ! espoir, viens à moi, ne laisse pas s’éteindre cette dernière étoile” – “Vile murderer!... Come hope, you faint and distant star”), avec un texte en partie nouveau de Treitschke pour le récitatif, probablement inspiré par son équivalent dans l’opéra *Léonore* de Mayr. Il fut chanté par la soprano Anna Milder, que Haydn avait un jour auditionnée

en lui disant, en guise de compliment: “Ma chère, vous avez une voix comme une maison.” Milder avait dit à Beethoven qu’elle avait trouvé la première version de cette scène “un rude combat [...] laide, non vocale et inamicale”; elle fut le seul membre de la distribution à figurer dans les trois créations de l’opéra, et elle devait par la suite créer le rôle de soprano de la IXe Symphonie.

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Argument

L’opéra se passe en Espagne, dans une prison où Florestan a été emprisonné par le gouverneur, Pizarro, qu’il a accusé de corruption. L’épouse de Florestan, Léonore, le recherche depuis qu’il a disparu deux ans auparavant. Au moment où débute l’opéra, déguisée en homme et se faisant appeler Fidelio, elle a réussi à pénétrer dans la prison comme aide du geôlier, Rocco.

COMPACT DISC ONE

Acte I

Scène 1

La maison de Rocco

[1] – [2] Jaquino, le portier de la prison, essaie de convaincre la fille de Rocco, Marcelline,

d’accepter sa demande en mariage, mais celle-ci refuse car elle est tombée amoureuse de Fidelio.

[3] Arrivent Rocco et Léonore, déguisée; cette dernière se désole de constater que non seulement elle a supplanté Jaquino dans le cœur de Marcelline, mais que Rocco approuve désormais le choix de sa fille. [4] Les quatre personnages expriment chacun leur réaction à cette évolution de la situation, [5] puis Rocco conseille au jeune couple de mettre de l’argent de côté s’ils veulent être heureux en mariage.

[6] Léonore supplie Rocco de lui permettre de l’aider dans sa tâche dans les souterrains de la prison, et déduit de sa réponse qu’un des prisonniers pourrait bien être son mari, Florestan.

Scène 2

La cour de la prison

[7] Pizarro apprend que le ministre, Don Fernando, projette une inspection surprise de la prison, ayant été informé de ses agissements. [8] Il décide de se débarrasser sur-le-champ de Florestan et ordonne que des sentinelles et un sonneur de trompette soient postés sur la tour de garde pour l’avertir de l’approche du ministre.

[9] Rocco refuse de tuer pour de l'argent, mais finit par accepter de creuser une tombe où sera enterré le corps; Pizarro se chargera lui-même d'assassiner Florestan. [10] – [11] Une fois les deux hommes partis, Léonore, qui soupçonne un complot, donne libre cours à son indignation et réaffirme avec passion son amour pour son époux. [12] Puis elle persuade Rocco de laisser sortir quelques-uns des prisonniers au soleil. [13] – [14] Tandis qu'ils savourent l'air et la lumière, Rocco déclare qu'il ne sera pas capable de creuser la tombe à lui seul et demande à Léonore de l'aider. [15] – [16] Réalisant que ce prisonnier est peut-être Florestan, cette dernière est submergée par l'émotion. [17] – [18] Pizarro revient, ordonne avec colère que les prisonniers regagnent leurs cellules, et enjoint Rocco, réticent, de descendre au plus vite dans le cachot.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Acte II

Scène 1

Un cachot sous terre

[1] – [2] Florestan, à l'isolement, enchaîné au mur, médite sombrement sur son terrible sort; [3] puis, dans une vision d'extase, Léonore lui apparaît sous les traits d'un ange, le menant à

la liberté. Il s'effondre, épuisé. [4] Rocco et Léonore descendent dans le cachot pour creuser la tombe. [5] – [7] Léonore reconnaît la voix de Florestan. Rocco, pris de pitié devant les souffrances du prisonnier, lui donne un peu de vin, et Léonore un morceau de pain. Elle se met à creuser sa tombe.

Rocco indique par un signal que tout est prêt. Pizarro tire un poignard, se réjouissant par avance de la mort de sa victime, et s'apprête à frapper Florestan lorsque Léonore se précipite pour lui barrer le chemin. À la plus grande stupéfaction des trois personnes présentes, elle déclare qu'elle est l'épouse de Florestan, et, menacée par Pizarro, sort un pistolet.

Une trompette annonce l'arrivée du ministre. Rocco demande qu'on apporte des torches pour raccompagner Pizarro, qui doit accueillir l'homme d'État, et le gouverneur s'éloigne précipitamment. [8] Léonore et Florestan sont réunis.

Scène 2

Devant la prison.

[9] – [10] Le peuple acclame le ministre, venu s'assurer de la bonne exécution de la justice du roi. Le ministre est stupéfait de découvrir que Florestan a été emprisonné par Pizarro. Il

arrête ce dernier et tend à Léonore les clés des chaînes de son époux. [11] – [12] Florestan et le peuple chantent les louanges de Léonore.

Traduction: Josée Bégau

Née dans l'Illinois, la soprano américaine **Christine Brewer** commença sa carrière professionnelle avec l'Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, avec qui elle a chanté Ellen Orford, Donna Anna et les rôles-titres d'*Ariadne auf Naxos* et d'*Armida* de Haydn. Parmi ses autres prestations, notons la comtesse Almaviva (New York City Opera et The Royal Opera, Covent Garden), Donna Anna (au Festival d'Edimbourg sous la baguette de Sir Charles Mackerras et à Londres, New York ainsi qu'en Floride). Elle a chanté *Iphigénie en Tauride* de Gluck à Madrid, Leonore (*Fidelio*) avec le St Paul Chamber Orchestra, *Oberon* de Weber avec Richard Hickox à Londres et *Die Aegyptische Helena* de Strauss à Santa Fe. Elle interpréta le rôle d'Isolde pour la première fois avec le BBC Symphony Orchestra et Donald Runnicles, chanta *Gloriana* de Britten avec Richard Hickox au Festival d'Aldeburgh et fut Chrysothemis (*Elektra*) avec le Cleveland Orchestra et Frans Welser-Möst. Elle s'est

forgée une réputation sur la scène internationale grâce à son interprétation d'*Ariadne auf Naxos* de Strauss, un rôle qu'elle a tenu pour l'English National Opera, l'Opéra de Lyon (à Lyon et à Paris), le Festival de Santa Fe ainsi que pour ses débuts au Metropolitan Opera sous la baguette de James Levine.

En concert, Christine Brewer a chanté avec les principaux orchestres britanniques et américains sous la baguette de chefs tels Sir Roger Norrington, Michael Tilson Thomas, Kurt Masur, John Adams, Christoph von Dohnányi, Raymond Leppard, Mark Wigglesworth, Andrew Litton, John Nelson, Sir Neville Marriner, Wolfgang Sawallisch et Ivan Fischer. Elle a enregistré entre autres la *Messe glagolitique* de Janáček et le *Te Deum* de Dvořák avec Robert Shaw, *Don Giovanni* avec Sir Charles Mackerras, *Vanessa* de Barber sous la baguette de Leonard Slatkin et elle a participé à l'Edition intégrale de Schubert par Graham Johnson.

Récemment, elle a pris part aux concerts de gala du Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (sous la baguette de Bernard Haitink), chanté *Il Prigioniero* de Dallapiccola au Théâtre de la Monnaie à Bruxelles (avec Antonio Pappano) et forgé des liens solides avec les Promenade

Concerts de la BBC, chantant entre autres le *War Requiem* de Britten sous la baguette de Jane Glover, la *Messe glagolitique* de Janáček avec Sir Andrew Davis, *Die Walküre* de Wagner et les *Gurrelieder* de Schoenberg sous Donald Runnicles ainsi que la Huitième symphonie de Mahler sous Sir Simon Rattle.

Comptant parmi les chanteurs les plus appréciés sur la scène internationale contemporaine, le ténor canadien **Richard Margison** s'est produit dans certains des plus grands théâtres du monde tels le Metropolitan Opera, l'Opéra de Vienne, le Deutsche Oper Berlin, le San Francisco Opera, le Théâtre de la Monnaie à Bruxelles, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, le Sydney Opera et l'Opéra néerlandais.

Il a chanté entre autres Pollione (*Norma* de Bellini) à Washington; Calaf (*Turandot*) avec le Canadian Opera Company à Toronto et pour le Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Dick Johnson (*La fanciulla del West*) à Seattle; Bacchus (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) pour le Royal Opera, Covent Garden; *Un ballo in maschera* au Sydney Opera; Manrico (*Il trovatore*), Radamès, Calaf et Bacchus au Metropolitan Opera à New York; Florestan (*Fidelio*) pour le Seattle Opera; Radamès et Manrico pour le

San Francisco Opera; et il a participé à des versions de concert de *La gioconda* à Carnegie Hall et de *Fidelio* avec le Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

Très demandé en concert, Richard Margison s'est produit avec le Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, le Philadelphia Orchestra, le San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, les Orchestres symphoniques de Montréal et Toronto, le National Arts Centre Orchestra à Ottawa et dans le cadre du Festival de Ravinia.

La discographie de Richard Margison comprend entre autres *Lanza*, un enregistrement pour le film sur la vie de Mario Lanza dans lequel il chante le rôle-titre, *Don Carlos* de Verdi avec l'Orchestre et le Chœur du Royal Opera House sous la baguette de Bernard Haitink, *Mazeppa* de Tchaïkovsky avec l'Orchestre symphonique de Gothenburg sous la baguette de Neeme Järvi ainsi que trois enregistrements avec Richard Bradshaw et le Canadian Opera Company Orchestra: un album en soliste intitulé *Arias françaises et italiennes*, un disque de *Pièces rares de Rossini et Verdi*, avec Gary Relyea, et *Aria, une sélection de Radio-Canada* avec Anita Krause, Wendy Nielson et Gary Relyea. Richard Margison a reçu le titre d'Officier de l'Ordre du Canada en 2001.

Né dans l'Essex, **Robert Lloyd** fit des études d'histoire à l'Université d'Oxford avant de se tourner vers la carrière de chanteur. En 1972 il fut nommé principale basse du Royal Opera House, Covent Garden où il interprète un répertoire extrêmement varié.

Il fut la première basse britannique à chanter le rôle-titre de *Boris Godounov* de Moussorgsky au Royal Opera House, Covent Garden en 1983. Il s'est également produit à La Scala de Milan (*Der fliegende Holländer* et *Parsifal*); au San Francisco Opera (*Don Carlos* et *L'incoronazione di Poppea*); au Chicago Lyric Opera (*Simon Boccanegra*); au Deutsche Oper à Berlin (*Tristan und Isolde*); à l'Opéra néerlandais (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* et *Parsifal*); et au Festival de Salzbourg (*Pelléas et Mélisande* et *Les Troyens*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Die Zauberflöte* et *Don Giovanni*). Il s'est souvent produit sur la scène du Metropolitan Opera à New York, entre autres dans *Rigoletto*, *Parsifal*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Les Troyens*, *Fidelio*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* et *Benvenuto Cellini*; pour le Royal Opera, il a chanté dans *Simon Boccanegra*, *Don Giovanni*, *Parsifal*, *Aida*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *La fanciulla del West*, *Le nozze di Figaro* et *Turandot*.

En concert, il a chanté avec le Cleveland Orchestra et von Dohnányi, le Philadelphia Orchestra sous Jansons, le London Philharmonic Orchestra sous Haitink et le Boston Symphony Orchestra sous la baguette de Frühbeck de Burgos. Avec le London Symphony Orchestra dirigé par Sir Colin Davis, il a chanté et enregistré le rôle de Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) et a participé à l'Odyssée Berlioz au Barbican à Londres.

Robert Lloyd a participé à plusieurs mises en scène télévisées très réussies et chanté pour la télévision dans *Le Château de Barbe-Bleue*, une version qui remporta le Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Television. Robert Lloyd possède une vaste discographie regroupant plus de soixante-dix enregistrements sonores et vidéo. La Reine lui remit le titre de Commandeur de l'Empire britannique à l'occasion de la Nouvelle Année 1991.

Rebecca Evans est née à Pontrhydyfen dans le Sud du Pays de Galles et a fait ses études à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Elle a participé au Young Singers Scheme du Welsh National Opera et a reçu le soutien de la Fondation Peter Moores pour travailler avec

Ronald Schneider à Vienne. Elle fait une grande carrière lyrique aux États-Unis, où elle a interprété les rôles de Susanna (*Les Noces de Figaro*) à l'Opéra de Santa Fe et au Festival de Ravinia; Adele (*La Chauve-souris*) au Lyric Opera de Chicago; Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Ann Trulove (*Le Libertin [The Rake's Progress]*) et Adina (*L'Elixir d'amour*) à l'Opéra de San Francisco; et Susanna ainsi que Zerlina au Metropolitan Opera de New York.

En Europe, elle est régulièrement invitée au Bayerische Staatsoper de Munich, où ses rôles ont été notamment Susanna, Sophie (*Le Chevalier à la rose*), Zdenka (*Arabella*), Ilia (*Idoménée*) et, plus récemment, Nanetta (*Falstaff*) sous la direction de Zubin Mehta. Dans d'autres pays, elle a chanté Ilia à l'Opéra néerlandais et à l'Opéra de Lausanne; le rôle titre de *La Petite Renarde rusée* au Scottish Opera; Susanna, Ilia, Marcelline (*Fidelio*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*) et Hero (*Béatrice et Bénédicte*) au Welsh National Opera; Romilda (*Xerxes*) à l'English National Opera; et Pamina (*La Flûte enchantée* sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras), Zerlina, Nanetta et Johanna (*Sweeney Todd*) au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden.

Sa vaste expérience dans le domaine du concert comprend des prestations au Proms de

la BBC et au Festival international d'Édimbourg. Elle a chanté le *Magnificat* de Bach avec l'Orchestre symphonique de San Francisco sous la direction de Michael Tilson Thomas, et le *Requiem allemand* de Brahms avec l'Orchestre symphonique de Boston sous la direction de Jeffrey Tate au Festival de Tanglewood.

Ses nombreux enregistrements comprennent Pamina (*La Flûte enchantée*) sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras, Susanna (*Les Noces de Figaro*), Ilia (*Idoménée*) et Marcelline (*Fidelio*) pour la série "Opera in English" de Chandos, Nanetta (*Falstaff*) avec Sir John Eliot Gardiner, une série d'enregistrements de Gilbert et Sullivan avec Sir Charles Mackerras et un enregistrement en soliste de mélodies italiennes.

Peter Wedd étudia à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama de Londres avec le regretté William McAlpine, puis au National Opera Studio. Il fut "Company Principal" de 1999 à 2001 au Royal Opera de Covent Garden où il chanta Ywain (*Gawain and the Green Knight*) et Kudrjas (*Kat'a Kabanová*), et il est retourné pour chanter le rôle de Borsa (Rigoletto). Il est régulièrement invité à se produire au Welsh National Opera dans des rôles tels que Don

José (*Carmen*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) et Laça (*Jenůfa*).

Parmi ses autres prestations en Grande-Bretagne et en Irlande, on citera Federico (*L'Arlesiana*) et Pluto (*Orphée aux enfers*) à l'Opera Holland Park, Kyska (*Šarkatán*) et Julius (*I cavalieri di Ekebiù*) au Festival de Wexford, Satyavan (*Savitri*) au Festival d'Aldeburgh. Il remporta un très vif succès dans le rôle de Rodolfo (*La Bohème*) au Royal Albert Hall de Londres. Hors du Royaume Uni Peter Wedd a chanté Tamino et Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*) avec l'Opéra de chambre européen, ainsi que Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) au Lyric Theatre de Singapore.

Très demandé en concert, il a travaillé avec des orchestres tels que le London Philharmonic, le Royal Scottish National, le City of London Sinfonia, le Northern Sinfonia et le Bournemouth Symphony. Peter Wedd s'est produit au Festival de Covent Garden et au Festival d'Édimbourg, en Slovaquie au Festival de Maribor, et en Suisse au Festival de Cernier.

Peter Wedd a enregistré *Turandot*, *Jenůfa* et *The Flying Dutchman* pour la série Opera in English de Chandos.

Né en Angleterre d'un père ukrainien et d'une mère anglaise, **Pavlo Hunka** reçut une formation de linguiste et travailla comme juriste au Royaume-Uni avant de se lancer dans la carrière de chanteur. Il commença ses études de chant au Royal Northern College of Music à Manchester et les acheva en Suisse avec Maria Sandulescu.

Il chanta plusieurs des grands rôles du répertoire baryton-basse lors des trois années qu'il passa à Bâle en Suisse. Depuis il a chanté dans la plupart des grands théâtres du monde, entre autres à Paris, Vienne, Munich, Florence, Amsterdam, Londres et Salzbourg. Il a chanté sous la baguette de chefs aussi prestigieux que Claudio Abbado, Jeffrey Tate, Semion Bychkov, Zubin Mehta, Peter Schneider et Mark Wigglesworth.

Son répertoire comprend le rôle de Barak (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), le rôle-titre de *Wozzeck*, les rôles de Barbe Bleue (*Le Château de Barbe-Bleue*), Pizarro (*Fidelio*) et Kaspar (*Der Freischütz*), le rôle-titre du *Vaisseau Fantôme*, le rôle de Lysiart (*Eurynthe*) et bien d'autres rôles de baryton-basse des répertoires russe, wagnérien et italien.

Parmi les moments forts de ces dernières saisons, notons le rôle de Chaklovity (*La Khovanchchina*) et *The Capture of Troy* avec

l'English National Opera, Zunbeltz à Bilbao, Dr Schön/Jack (*Lulu*) à l'Opéra de Bonn, le rôle-titre de *Falstaff*, Alberich (*Siegfried*) et Hunding (*Die Walküre*), tous pour le Canadian Opera de Toronto, Tomski (*La Dame de pique*) au Teatro Real de Madrid et Siskov (*De La Maison des morts*) à l'Opéra de Genève.

Christopher Purves a fait des études d'anglais au King's College de Cambridge avant de chanter et de faire des enregistrements avec le groupe de rock and roll vocal très novateur *Harvey and the Wallbangers*. Lors de la disparition de ce groupe en 1988, il a repris sa formation vocale avec David Keren, Diane Forlano et Janice Chapman.

Ses engagements lyriques comprennent les rôles de Figaro (*Les Noces de Figaro*) au Welsh National Opera, au Scottish Opera et pour Opera North; Marcello (*La Bohème*) au Scottish Opera; Papageno (*La Flûte enchantée*), Faninal (*Le Chevalier à la rose*) au Welsh National Opera et pour Opera North; Podestà (*La Pie voleuse*) à l'Opéra de Garsington; Siegfried (*Genoveva*) et Dulcamara (*L'Elixir d'amour*) pour Opera North. Il a créé le rôle de l'Executioner (*Le Bourreau*) dans *Ines de Castro* de James Macmillan et a chanté dans

Parthenogenesis de Macmillan au Festival d'Édimbourg, où il a également interprété le rôle de Cecil dans *Maria Stuarda* sous la direction de Sir Charles Mackerras.

En concert il a chanté la Messe en ut de Mozart à Aix-en-Provence avec les Sixteen, *Les Noces* de Stravinski avec Philippe Herreweghe à Bruxelles, les *Vêpres* de Monteverdi avec Richard Hickox, *Apocalypse* de John Tavener aux Proms avec le City of London Sinfonia, la *Passion selon saint Jean* avec Paul Goodwin à Madrid, *Le Messie* avec le Scottish Chamber Orchestra, *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* avec le London Sinfonietta sous la direction de Sir Simon Rattle, le *War Requiem* de Britten et *La Création* de Haydn avec l'Orchestre d'Ulster, *Belshazzar's Feast* avec l'English Northern Sinfonia sous la direction de Paul Daniel, et Lucifer dans *La Resurrezione* de Haendel avec Paul McCreesh.

Christopher Purves a fait ses débuts en récital au Festival d'Aldeburgh en juin 2004. Ses enregistrements comprennent le rôle titre des *Noces de Figaro*, Gottardo (*The Thieving Magpie*), et *La Flûte enchantée*, tous pour la série "Opera in English" de Chandos.

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

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

En concert, Ashley Catling s'est produit au Barbican Concert Hall, au Royal Glasgow Concert Halls, au Queen Elizabeth Hall, à St John's Smith Square et à St Martin in the Fields. Parmi ses prestations les plus récentes, notons la *Passion selon saint Matthieu* à la cathédrale de Winchester, un récital de chansons de Britten pour voix et harpe à Aldeburgh et des tournées en Europe et aux États-Unis durant lesquelles il interpréta et enregistra le nouvel opéra vidéo de Steve Reich, *Three Tales*, avec le compositeur lui-même.

Il a interprété entre autres *The Stargazer*, une œuvre pour ténor et orchestre symphonique de Lynne Plowman commandée par les London Mozart Players, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) avec Opera by Definition, *Die Fledermaus* au Grand Opera House de Dublin, Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) pour Opera Holland Park, John Millar Jnr dans *Friends of the People* de David Horne

pour Scottish Opera, Gawain dans la création mondiale de l'opéra de Lynne Plowman *Gawain and the Green Knight* avec Music Theatre Wales, et Tamino (*The Little Magic Flute*) avec Opera North. Il a enregistré entre autres *Contrabandista*, et *L'Esule di Granata* pour Opera Rara.

Reconnu comme l'un des plus grands orchestres du monde, le **Philharmonia Orchestra** a depuis plus de cinq ans le grand maestro allemand Christoph von Dohnányi pour chef principal. Le premier à avoir tenu ce poste fut Otto Klemperer et l'Orchestre depuis lors a collaboré avec succès avec Lorin Maazel (au poste de chef principal assistant), Ricardo Muti (chef principal et directeur musical), Giuseppe Sinopoli (directeur musical), une tradition qui se poursuit aujourd'hui avec Kurt Sanderling (chef émérite), Vladimir Ashkenazy (chef lauréat) et Sir Charles Mackerras (chef principal invité). L'ensemble a également été associé à des personnalités aussi éminentes que Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan et Carlo Maria Giulini. L'Orchestre continue à collaborer avec des chefs et des solistes de stature mondiale et recrute les

jeunes instrumentistes les plus talentueux d'Europe.

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

Un nombre croissant de concerts de l'Orchestre sont retransmis par BBC Radio 3, entre autres sa participation annuelle aux Promenade Concerts de la BBC. L'orchestre symphonique le plus enregistré au monde, avec plus de mille disques à son actif, parmi lesquels plusieurs bandes originales pour le cinéma et la télévision, le Philharmonia Orchestra est réputé dans le monde entier. Sa discographie comprend, pour Opera Rara, plusieurs disques de récitals ainsi que onze intégrales d'opéras et, pour Opera in English chez Chandos, série financée par la Peter Moores Foundation, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*,

Lucia of Lammermoor, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aïda*, *La Bohème*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Turandot*, une version primée de *Tosca* ainsi que plusieurs récitals solistes d'airs lyriques avec Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny et John Tomlinson. Le Philharmonia Orchestra consolide constamment sa réputation internationale grâce à des tournées régulières et récemment de prestigieuses résidences au Châtelet Théâtre Musical à Paris, au Megaron à Athènes et au Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts à New York.

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.

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 Sir Thomas Allen, Bruce Ford, Alan Opie, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Barry Banks, 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.



Bill Cooper

Scottish Opera's production of *Fidelio*



Mike Hoban

Glyndebourne Festival Opera's production of *Fidelio*

L'opera unica

All'epoca delle prime rappresentazioni londinesi dell'opera, Thomas Love Peacock scrisse:

Fidelio accosta la più profonda armonia a una melodia che parla all'anima. La giocosità della speranza giovanile, l'eroismo dell'amore devoto, l'ira del tiranno, la disperazione del prigioniero, l'esplosione del sole della libertà sulla desolazione della cella... sono ritratti con una forza e un realismo che rendono comprensibile il linguaggio della musica, con la sua potenza irresistibile di riversare il pensiero nel suono.

La genesi di questa "opera tra le opere" (Gustav Mahler), "unica, per numero e qualità" (Otto Klemperer), è ricca di affascinanti contraddizioni. Fu l'unica composizione beethoveniana completa destinata al teatro, sebbene il compositore collaborasse spesso con impresari e teatri e fosse sempre alla ricerca di libretti adatti. Poche opere hanno un tema così chiaramente politico – (la vittoria del liberalismo sull'ingiusta tirannia reazionaria) o si avvicinano maggiormente a un particolare evento storico (la caduta della Bastiglia durante la Rivoluzione francese del 1789) ed è

sorprendente sapere che questo libretto si ispiri a un episodio realmente accaduto: un aristocratico era stato salvato dalla prigione da alcuni rivoluzionari della sinistra. E mentre l'opera, nella forma in cui viene rappresentata per lo più oggi (come nella presente registrazione), sembra una composizione definita e inevitabile come tutte le altre partiture di Beethoven, in realtà fu il prodotto di oltre dieci anni di lavoro e comprese quattro (quasi cinque) ouvertures, tre versioni musicali e tre approfondite revisioni del libretto.

Nell'allora piccolo centro provinciale tedesco di Bonn, il padre di Beethoven, tenore, e il giovane aspirante compositore presto si impegnarono con la locale orchestra teatrale di corte dove, all'età di dodici-tredici anni, Ludwig suonava il clavicembalo. In seguito, dopo un primo viaggio a Vienna per prendere lezioni da Mozart, Beethoven ritornò alla vita di musicista orchestrale. Come violista per oltre quattro stagioni e mezzo, fece esperienza diretta del repertorio contemporaneo dell'opera leggera: opere tedesche e francesi in cui i brani cantati si alternavano al parlato. I compositori comprendevano Grétry e

Dittersdorf, poi Cimarosa e Paisiello con le loro opere buffe, qualcosa di Gluck e tre opere di Mozart. L'influenza di questi lavori su Beethoven si può notare già nel suo secondo (per la verità primo) Concerto per pianoforte, in cui questo strumento rappresenta una sorta di voce solista tra "arie" e "recitativi" orchestrali. Forse, soprattutto, fu così che nacque in lui la convinzione che il testo drammatico (parlato o musicato come recitativo) fosse essenziale in un'opera riuscita. Così gli esempi più ammirati e ispiratori per i suoi primi tentativi furono *Il flauto magico* di Mozart e le opere francesi di Cherubini: *Lodoïska*, *Les Deux Journées* e *Médée*.

La prima composizione teatrale di Beethoven fu rappresentata da alcune arie aggiuntive per un'opera comica tedesca (*Il bel calzolaio* di Umlauf) ma, considerata la sua ammirazione per il *Flauto magico* e la sua presenza a Vienna (dal 1792 in poi), fu quasi inevitabile che il primo progetto operistico completo si svolgesse in collaborazione con Emanuel Schikaneder, l'attore/impresario che aveva scritto il libretto per l'ultima opera di Mozart. Schikaneder gli propose *Il fuoco di Vesta*, una storia di vergini nell'antica Roma che parlavano (per dirla con Beethoven) "una lingua e versi che potevano venire solo dalla

bocca delle fruttivendole viennesi". All'inizio del 1804 Beethoven si era stancato di questo testo e scrisse a un amico che l'impero di Schikaneder "era stato interamente eclissato dalla luce delle brillanti e attraenti opere francesi". Si riferiva al tempo passato a Bonn e al successo locale di Cherubini: alla fine del 1803 a Vienna erano state allestite sei delle sue opere più recenti in meno di due anni. In seguito nella capitale austriaca arrivarono opere di Gaveau, Méhul e Spontini (soprattutto *La Vestale*). Stimolato da questa nuova invasione, Beethoven scrisse: "Ho fatto adattare in fretta un libretto francese e adesso comincio a lavorarci". Si trattava di *Léonore, ou l'amour conjugal* di Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, un dramma con molta musica composta originariamente da Pierre Gaveau.

Il lavoro per trasformare la *Léonore* francese in un soddisfacente *Fidelio* tedesco avrebbe occupato Beethoven a intermittenza per i successivi dieci anni. Ma la sua ricerca di altri libretti durante quel decennio e in seguito durante la sua carriera fu insistente quasi come quella di Puccini. Possibili progetti compresero un *Macbeth* (il compositore aveva già creato un'ouverture per un altro testo shakespeariano, il *Coriolano*), *Le rovine di Babilonia* di Treitschke (che sarebbe stato il terzo librettista

del *Fidelio*), *Il ritorno di Ulisse, Romolo e Remo e Bacco*. Nell'estate del 1811, all'incirca durante il periodo in cui lavorava alla settima Sinfonia, Beethoven scrisse nella sua corrispondenza: "È molto difficile trovare un buon libretto per un'opera. Dall'anno scorso ne ho rifiutati dodici o più". Sebbene avrebbe scritto molte opere per voci e orchestra, l'unica musica veramente operistica sopravvissuta dopo queste avventure fallite sono due movimenti di Finale per due *pastiche* scritti da Treitschke.

Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, autore di *Léonore*, fu avvocato e giudice al servizio di diverse amministrazioni francesi prima e durante la Rivoluzione. Durante il suo lavoro in Touraine negli anni del decennio giacobino del 1790, in base a memorie pubblicate più di quarant'anni prima, egli dichiarò di aver aiutato Madame de La Valette, una nobildonna, a sottrarre alla ghigliottina il suo aristocratico marito. L'episodio, "fedele ad avvenimenti storici reali" avrebbe ispirato il dramma *Léonore*. La prima dell'opera teatrale di Bouilly e Gaveau si svolse a Parigi nel febbraio 1798 al Théâtre Feydeau, che vantava una compagnia di cantanti/attori di levatura decisamente superiore, data la loro abilità di recitare in distici eroici e anche di cantare. (Un anno

prima, il primo Florestano – lo stesso compositore Gaveau – e la prima Léonore – Julie-Angelique Scio – avevano creato i ruoli di Giasone e Medea nell'opera omonima di Cherubini.) Così il dialogo parlato, favorito comunque da Beethoven e che si sarebbe dimostrato un importante trampolino di lancio nel *Fidelio* tra i brani vocali/strumentali dell'opera, fu parte integrante della *Léonore* fin dall'inizio. Altri ricordi dell'attività ufficiale di Bouilly, anche in questo caso con i dettagli della fedeltà incrollabile di una moglie verso un marito ingiustamente imprigionato, ispirarono il suo libretto *Les Deux Journées* (o *Il portatore d'acqua*) per un'opera di Cherubini del 1800 che ebbe enorme successo a Vienna poco dopo e un'importante influenza musicale e drammatica nel lavoro di Beethoven impernato su *Léonore*.

I soggetti di Bouilly erano facilmente accessibili: il bene e il male erano rappresentati direttamente attraverso personaggi e situazioni brutalmente contemporanei rispetto ai racconti della mitologia classica che avevano dominato il teatro del Settecento. In *Léonore* ogni nome nell'elenco dei personaggi rivela una qualità del personaggio o della sua posizione sociale e politica. Roc (il Rocco di Beethoven) è "saldo come una roccia",

irremovibile (ma cede di fronte al denaro). Fidelio, nome di chiara derivazione latina, è fedele, leale, affidabile – tutti attributi di Leonora nella sua missione segreta per salvare il marito. Dom Pizare (il Pizarro di Beethoven) ricorda l'abuso di potere legato ai conquistadores spagnoli durante la brutale conquista del Nuovo Mondo. La coppia "comica" di gente comune ha i nomi tipici dei servitori – Jaquino ("Giacomino") e Marceline/Marzellina. Per virtù del suo collegamento veristico con i recenti eventi della Rivoluzione – e ancora più accettabile perché racconta una storia morale che esalta la validità del matrimonio – la *Léonore* di Bouilly divenne un libro "caldo" nell'Europa operistica. Dopo Gaveau, fu musicato in un tempo brevissimo da Ferdinando Paer (a Dresda, nel 1804) e da Simone Mayr (a Padova nel 1805) oltre che da Beethoven, la cui prima versione raggiunse il teatro a Vienna nel novembre 1805.

Beethoven avrebbe voluto che la sua opera si intitolasse *Léonore* dal vero nome della sua eroina, anziché *Fidelio* (preferito dai direttori e dagli editori per distinguerla dalle *Léonore* degli altri compositori) dal nome maschile che assume per entrare a servizio nella prigione di stato. L'opera fu inizialmente divisa in tre atti;

i primi due corrispondevano all'attuale Atto I. L'Atto III originale non aveva cambiamento di scena: la visita del ministro, don Fernando, e la liberazione di Florestano si svolgevano nel sotterraneo dove quest'ultimo era stato imprigionato. Il libretto fu preparato da Joseph Ferdinand von Sonnleithner, segretario del Teatro di Corte e tra i fondatori della famosa associazione concertistica della città, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. Egli basò il suo lavoro su una traduzione letterale di Bouilly, approfittò di tutte le opportunità che forniva il libretto francese per la musica e, in consultazione con Beethoven, ne trovò altre da alcuni spunti nel dialogo francese. Questi nuovi testi comprendevano il famoso quartetto dell'Atto I ("Mir ist so wunderbar" – "A wonder clear and pure") e tutta la musica di Pizarro, compresa la sua prima grande aria di vendetta ("Welch ein Augenblick!" – "Ah, this is ecstasy") e il quartetto del sotterraneo ("Er sterbe!" – "You perish!"). Nell'opera di Bouilly/Gaveau il ruolo di Pizarro ('Dom Pizare') era parlato.

Nella prima versione della partitura era presente quasi tutta la musica principale, anche se in forma leggermente più lunga o diversa dal punto di vista melodico. (Alcuni commentatori hanno lamentato la perdita nel

1814 dell'introduzione con un recitativo accompagnato e la più lunga e florida versione del duetto "O namenlose Freude!" ("Oh joy beyond all understanding") di Florestano e Leonora.) Esistevano anche tre numeri che, si potrebbe dire col senno di poi, ostacolavano l'azione (e il fluire della musica) e fortunatamente sarebbero stati tagliati nel 1814. Due – un trio comico per Rocco/Marcellina/Jaquino e un duetto per Marcellina/Leonora – vertevano sulla trama secondaria dell'opera, il matrimonio tra la figlia di Rocco, Marcellina, con il nuovo apprendista del padre "Fidelio"; il terzo era un'altra aria di vendetta per Pizarro che concludeva il secondo atto originale.

La prima dell'opera il 20 novembre 1805 al Theater an der Wien di Vienna, luogo di nascita anche del *Flauto magico*, non ebbe successo di pubblico. Gli spettatori viennesi si erano dati alla fuga davanti all'invasione delle truppe napoleoniche che adesso occupavano le poltrone del teatro, ma che non riconobbero le nuove opere di questo vero figlio della loro patria. Alcuni amici solleciti convinsero un riluttante Beethoven che la sua opera era troppo lunga e Stephan von Breuning, collega del compositore dai tempi di Bonn, si occupò di rivedere il libretto di Sonnleithner. I tre atti

divennero due (nella disposizione attuale), gran parte del dialogo e quasi tutti i numeri musicali furono abbreviati – alcuni drasticamente, come la seconda aria di Pizarro. Beethoven rifiutò di tagliare i due numeri sul fidanzamento tra Leonora e Marcellina, perciò Breuning li riordinò nella sequenza dell'Atto I. Fu composta una seconda ouverture (la "Leonore N. 3" di oggi) ed eseguita al posto della "Leonore N. 2". La reazione del pubblico e della stampa (marzo/aprile 1806) fu più positiva, ma Beethoven decise che il botteghino del teatro lo stava truffando e ritirò la partitura dopo due spettacoli apparentemente molto mal preparati.

Quasi fin dai tempi del compositore i commentatori di indole più romantica hanno paragonato il crescente isolamento causato dalla sordità di Beethoven alla solitaria prigionia di Florestano nel sotterraneo, e le parole che quest'ultimo pronuncia nella sua aria ("In des Lebens Frühlingstagen/ist das Glück von mir geflohn" – "In the spring of youthful promise I had all my hopes destroyed") al grido di disperazione del testamento di Heiligenstadt. Leonora, la moglie fedele a dispetto di ogni avversità, è stata paragonata alla compagna di una vita che il compositore non sembrò mai capace di trovare. Sembra improbabile che

Beethoven avrebbe abbandonato un'opera che in seguito avrebbe definito "di tutti i miei figli, l'unico che mi sia costato i peggiori dolori di parto, l'unico che mi abbia portato il maggior dolore; e per questo motivo, quello che mi è più caro. Più di tutti gli altri lo ritengo degno di essere preservato e usato per la scienza dell'arte". Tuttavia, seguirono sei anni in cui Beethoven completò e fece eseguire le sinfonie 4–8, insieme con una serie di altre importanti composizioni, ma il progetto del *Fidelio* venne accantonato, a parte i progettati allestimenti a Berlino e Praga che non furono mai realizzati. In quest'ultima occasione Beethoven compose una terza ouverture per l'opera, oggi detta *Leonore* No 1.

Poi nel 1814 tre dei cantanti dell'Opera di corte di Vienna, forse influenzati dall'enorme accoglienza locale concessa alla Sinfonia "*La vittoria di Wellington*", attuale per l'epoca, ma decisamente d'occasione, chiesero un revival dell'opera per alcuni spettacoli di beneficenza al teatro Kärntnertor. Beethoven accettò, a condizione di poter apportare (importanti) modifiche all'opera, per cui si rivolse Georg Friedrich Treitschke, poeta e direttore artistico del Teatro di Corte. Furono eliminati i tre numeri che avevano rallentato il dramma prima, praticamente tutti gli altri brani furono

in qualche modo modificati (il trio dell'atto II "Euch werde Lohn in bessern Welten" ("In a better world they surely shall applaud you"), e il quartetto "Er sterbe!" furono ampliati) e il finale di entrambi gli atti fu radicalmente riveduto. Alla fine dell'Atto I, la seconda aria di Pizarro lasciò il posto a una commovente conclusione con il ritorno dei prigionieri alle loro celle ("Leb wohl, / du warmes Sonnenlicht" – "Farewell, the warm and radiant light") mentre, nel Secondo atto, l'arrivo del ministro e il perdono di Florestano guadagnarono entrambi una nuova ambientazione all'aria aperta e alla luce ("La spianata del castello") e un accompagnamento musicale completo. Questo iniziava con il risonante (e radicale dal punto di vista politico) nuovo testo di Treitschke per il discorso di esordio del Ministro: "Des besten Königs Wink und Wille" ("My noble sovereign's will and order") seguito da un appello alla fratellanza. Con gli inconfondibili sottintesi legati all'aperta dichiarazione della Convenzione rivoluzionaria francese che sollecitava tutte le nazioni d'Europa a rovesciare i propri oppressori, questo testo sicuramente fece parlare di sé nella Vienna imperiale che celebrava l'imminente caduta di Napoleone.

Il *Fidelio* nella sua nuova forma fu eseguito per la prima volta con grande successo il 23 maggio 1914 al Kärntnertortheater. Il cast comprendeva i tre beneficiari che avevano commissionato il revival, uno dei quali, Johann Michael Vogl (Pizarro) sarebbe diventato l'interprete di lieder preferito di un giovane compositore presente tra il pubblico: Franz Schubert. Non tutte le revisioni musicali furono adottate subito. A soli due giorni dalla prima, Beethoven iniziò una nuova ouverture ("Fidelio", che doveva condurre più naturalmente alla musica comica del duetto di apertura) che non poté essere eseguita fino alla seconda serata e fu inizialmente sostituita da *Le rovine d'Atene*. L'aria dell' "oro" di Rocco ("Hat man nicht auch Gold beineben" – "If you don't save up your money"), eliminata nel 1806, fu ripristinata il 18 luglio, il giorno in cui fu udito per la prima volta il grande monologo di Leonora nell'atto I ("Abscheulicher... Komm', Hoffnung, laß' den letzten Stern" – "Vile murderer!... Come hope, you faint and distant star"), con un nuovo recitativo di Treitschke, probabilmente modellato sul numero equivalente nella *Léonore* di Mayr. L'interprete fu il soprano Anna Milder, a cui Haydn aveva rivolto il seguente complimento: "Mia cara, avete una voce

grande come una casa". La Milder dichiarò a Beethoven di aver trovato la prima versione della sua scena "una dura lotta... brutta, non musicale e ostile"; fu l'unica cantante ad apparire in tutte e tre le prime dell'opera e fu il primo soprano a interpretare la nona Sinfonia.

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Argomento

L'opera è ambientata in Spagna, in una prigione. Pizarro, il governatore, ha rinchiuso qui Florestano, con l'accusa di corruzione. Leonora, moglie di Florestano, in cerca del marito da due anni, si è travestita da uomo e si fa chiamare Fidelio. Così è riuscita a entrare nella prigione e a farsi assumere come assistente di Rocco, il carceriere.

COMPACT DISC ONE

Atto I

Scena prima

Casa di Rocco

[1] – [2] Jaquino, il portiere della prigione, cerca di convincere Marcellina, figlia di Rocco, ad accettarlo come marito, ma la

ragazza rifiuta perché si è innamorata di Fidelio.

[3] Entrano Rocco e Leonora, travestita.

Leonora è addolorata per aver involontariamente allontanato Jaquino da Marcellina, e soprattutto perché Rocco adesso ha approvato la scelta di sua figlia. [4] I quattro personaggi esprimono i loro diversi stati d'animo, dopo di che [5] Rocco consiglia alla giovane coppia di risparmiare per avere un matrimonio felice.

[6] Leonora supplica Rocco di farsi aiutare nel lavoro nei sotterranei della prigione e dalla sua risposta deduce che uno dei prigionieri possa essere suo marito Florestano.

Scena 2

Il cortile della prigione

[7] Pizarro viene a sapere che il ministro di stato, Don Fernando, informato delle sue prevaricazioni, ha in programma un'ispezione a sorpresa della prigione. [8] Decide di togliere subito di mezzo Florestano e ordina alle sentinelle e a un trombetta di piazzarsi sulla torre per avvisarlo dell'arrivo del ministro.

[9] Rocco rifiuta di essere pagato per uccidere il prigioniero, ma alla fine accetta di scavargli la fossa; Pizarro ucciderà

personalmente Florestano. [10] – [11] Quando i due escono, Leonora ha il sospetto che le due complottarano. Ha un'esplosione di indignazione e conferma appassionatamente il suo amore per il marito. [12] In seguito convince Rocco a lasciare uscire al sole alcuni prigionieri per godere un po' dell'aria aperta. [13] – [14] Rocco dice che non riesce a scavare la fossa da solo e chiede l'aiuto di Leonora. [15] – [16] Rendendosi conto che il prigioniero a cui è destinata potrebbe essere Florestano, Leonora è sopraffatta dall'emozione. [17] – [18] Ritorna Pizarro, ordina irosamente ai prigionieri di tornare in cella e sollecita il riluttante Rocco a scendere nel sotterraneo.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Atto II

Scena 1

Un sotterraneo nella prigione

[1] – [2] Florestano, incatenato alla parete, in isolamento, medita sul suo terribile destino; [3] poi in un'estatica visione gli appare Leonora nelle vesti di un angelo, che lo conduce alla libertà. L'uomo si accascia, esausto. [4] Rocco e Leonora scendono nella cella per scavare la fossa. [5] – [7] Leonora riconosce la voce di Florestano. Rocco,

impietosito dalla sofferenza del prigioniero, gli dà un po' di vino e Leonora gli porge un pezzo di pane. Poi inizia a scavare.

Rocco dà il segnale che tutto è pronto. Con gioia maligna Pizarro sguaina la spada sulla vittima e sta per colpire Florestano, quando Leonora si precipita a impedirglielo. Con somma meraviglia degli altri tre, la donna dichiara di essere la moglie di Florestano e, quando Pizarro minaccia anche lei, estrae una pistola.

Uno squillo di tromba annuncia l'arrivo del ministro. Rocco chiede un lume per accompagnare Pizarro ad accoglierlo e Pizarro fugge precipitosamente. [9] Leonora e Florestano sono riuniti.

Scena 2

Davanti alla prigione

[9] – [10] Gli abitanti della città acclamano il ministro, venuto per assicurare che sia fatta giustizia per conto del Re. Il ministro è stupefatto quando scopre che Florestano è stato imprigionato da Pizarro. Arresta il governatore e consegna a Leonora le chiavi delle catene del marito. [11] – [12] Florestano e il popolo cantano le lodi di Leonora.

Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Christine Brewer, soprano americano, è nata nell'Illinois. La sua carriera professionale è iniziata con l'Opera Theatre di Saint Louis, con cui ha interpretato Ellen Orford, Donna Anna e i ruoli di protagonista in *Ariadne auf Naxos* di Strauss e *Armida* di Haydn. Altre apparizioni hanno compreso la Contessa Almaviva (New York City Opera e Royal Opera, Covent Garden), Donna Anna (Festival di Edimburgo per la direzione di sir Charles Mackerras e Londra, New York e Florida). Ha cantato *Iphigenie en Tauride* di Gluck a Madrid, Leonora (*Fidelio*) con la St Paul Chamber Orchestra, *Oberon* di Weber con Richard Hickox a Londra e *Die Aegyptische Helena* di Strauss a Santa Fe. Ha esordito nel ruolo di Isolda con la BBC Symphony Orchestra e Donald Runnicles, *Gloriana* di Britten con Richard Hickox al festival di Aldeburgh e Chrysothemis (*Elektra*) con l'Orchestra di Cleveland e Frans Welser-Möst. Ha ottenuto fama internazionale per le sue interpretazioni di *Ariadne auf Naxos* di Strauss per English National Opera, Opéra de Lyon (a Lione e Parigi), il Festival di Santa Fe e al debutto alla Metropolitan Opera con James Levine.

Christine Brewer si è esibita in concerto con le più importanti orchestre americane e

britanniche e direttori quali sir Roger Norrington, Michael Tilson-Thomas, Kurt Masur, John Adams, Christoph von Dohnányi, Raymond Leppard, Mark Wigglesworth, Andrew Litton, John Nelson, sir Neville Marriner, Wolfgang Sawallisch e Ivan Fischer. La discografia include la *Messa Glagolitica* di Janáček e il *Tè Deum* di Dvořák con Robert Shaw, Don Giovanni diretto da sir Charles Mackerras, *Vanessa* di Barber con Leonard Slatkin, oltre alla partecipazione all'Edizione Schubert integrale di Graham Johnson.

Gli impegni concertistici più recenti hanno compreso serate di gala alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (con Bernard Haitink), *Il Prigioniero* di Dallapiccola al teatro La Monnaie di Bruxelles (diretta da Antonio Pappano), e un solido impegno nella serie dei BBC Proms, in cui ha interpretato, tra l'altro, il *War Requiem* di Britten per la direzione di Jane Glover, la *Messa Glagolitica* di Janáček con sir Andrew Davis, *Die Walküre* di Wagner, i *Gurrelieder* di Schönberg diretti da Donald Runnicles, e l'ottava Sinfonia di Mahler diretta da sir Simon Rattle.

Uno dei cantanti più apprezzati attualmente dalla critica sulla scena internazionale, il tenore

canadese **Richard Margison** si è esibito in molti dei principali teatri lirici del mondo, tra cui Metropolitan Opera, Vienna Staatsoper, Deutsche Oper Berlin, San Francisco Opera, Théâtre royal de la Monnaie di Bruxelles, Covent Garden, Sydney Opera e Netherlands Opera.

I ruoli comprendono Pollione (*Norma* di Bellini) a Washington; Calaf (*Turandot*) con la Canadian Opera Company di Toronto e per la Royal Opera; Dick Johnson (*La fanciulla del West*) a Seattle; Bacchus (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) per la Royal Opera; *Un ballo in maschera* alla Sydney Opera; Manrico (*Il trovatore*), Radamès, Calaf e Bacchus alla Metropolitan Opera di New York; Florestan (*Fidelio*) per la Seattle Opera; Radamès e Manrico per la San Francisco Opera; e interpretazioni in concerto de *La gioconda* al Carnegie Hall e *Fidelio* con la Vancouver Symphony.

Molto richiesto per i concerti, Richard Margison è comparso con la Royal Philharmonic Orchestra di Londra, la Philadelphia Orchestra, la San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, le orchestre sinfoniche di Montreal e Toronto, la National Arts Centre Orchestra di Ottawa e ha partecipato al Festival di Ravinia.

La discografia comprende *Lanza*, una registrazione realizzata per il film biografico su Mario Lanza, in cui il tenore interpreta il ruolo del protagonista, *Don Carlo* di Verdi con l'Orchestra e il Coro della Royal Opera House diretti da Bernard Haitink, *Mazeppa* di Ciaikovskij con l'Orchestra Sinfonica di Göteborg diretta da Neeme Järvi, tre registrazioni con Richard Bradshaw e la Canadian Opera Company Orchestra: un album solistico, *French and Italian Arias, Rarities by Rossini and Verdi*, con Gary Relyea, e *Aria, une sélection de Radio-Canada* con Anita Krause, Wendy Nielson e Gary Relyea. Richard Margison è stato insignito del titolo di Officer of the Order of Canada nel 2001.

Robert Lloyd è nato nella regione inglese dell'Essex e ha studiato all'Università di Oxford. Dopo un inizio come storico accademico, ha intrapreso la carriera di cantante. Nel 1972 è stato nominato basso solista alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, dove ha interpretato un repertorio vastissimo.

È stato il primo basso britannico a interpretare il ruolo di protagonista nel *Boris Godunov* di Mussorgsky alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden nel 1983. È comparso

inoltre alla Scala di Milano (*Der fliegende Holländer* e *Parsifal*), alla San Francisco Opera (*Don Carlos* e *L'incoronazione di Poppea*), alla Chicago Lyric Opera (*Simon Boccanegra*), alla Deutsche Oper di Berlino (*Tristan und Isolde*), alla Netherlands Opera (*Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* e *Parsifal*) e al Festival di Salisburgo (*Pelléas et Mélisande* e *Les Troyens*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Die Zauberflöte* e *Don Giovanni*). Le sue numerose apparizioni alla Metropolitan Opera di New York comprendono *Rigoletto*, *Parsifal*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Les Troyens*, *Fidelio*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* e *Benvenuto Cellini*. Per la Royal Opera di Londra ha interpretato *Simon Boccanegra*, *Don Giovanni*, *Parsifal*, *Aida* e *Die Zauberflöte*, *La fanciulla del West*, *Le nozze di Figaro* e *Turandot*.

È apparso in concerto con la Cleveland Orchestra diretta da Cristoph von Dohnányi, la Philadelphia Orchestra con Mariss Jansons, la London Philharmonic Orchestra con Bernard Haitink e la Boston Symphony Orchestra con Frühbeck de Burgos. Con la London Symphony Orchestra diretta da sir Colin Davis ha interpretato e inciso il ruolo di Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) ed è comparso nella serie *Odyssey* dedicata a Berlioz al Barbican di Londra.

Robert Lloyd ha interpretato numerose produzioni televisive di grande successo ed è comparso in un allestimento televisivo di *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* che ha ricevuto il premio televisivo della Royal Philharmonic Society. La sua vasta discografia riunisce più di settanta registrazioni audio e video. Nel 1991 è stato insignito del titolo di Commander of the British Empire.

Rebecca Evans è nata a Pontrhydyfen nel Galles del sud e ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Ha partecipato al progetto Young Singers della Welsh National Opera e ha studiato con Ronald Schneider a Vienna con l'appoggio della Peter Moores Foundation. Ha un'importante carriera teatrale in America dove ha cantato Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) per la Santa Fe Opera e al Festival di Ravinia; Adele (*Die Fledermaus*) per la Chicago Lyric Opera; Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Ann Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) e Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) per la San Francisco Opera; Susanna e Zerlina per la Metropolitan Opera di New York.

In Europa è ospite regolare della Bayerische Staatsoper di Monaco, per cui ha interpretato, tra l'altro, Susanna, Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Zdenka (*Arabella*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*) e di recente

Nanetta (*Falstaff*) per la direzione di Zubin Mehta. Inoltre ha cantato Ilia per la Netherlands Opera e l'Opéra de Lausanne; il ruolo di protagonista in *The Cunning Little Vixen* per la Scottish Opera; Susanna, Ilia, Marzelline (*Fidelio*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*), Hero (*Beatrice and Benedict*) per la Welsh National Opera; Romilda (*Xerxes*) per la English National Opera; Pamina (*Il flauto magico*) diretta da sir Charles Mackerras, Zerlina, Nannetta e Johanna (*Sweeney Todd*) alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

La sua intensa attività concertistica comprende apparizioni ai Prom della BBC e al Festival internazionale di Edimburgo. Ha interpretato il *Magnificat* di Bach con la San Francisco Symphony Orchestra diretta da Michael Tilson Thomas, e il Requiem di Brahms con la Boston Symphony Orchestra diretta da Jeffrey Tate al festival di Tanglewood.

La ricca discografia di Rebecca Evans comprende Pamina (*Il flauto magico*) diretta da sir Charles Mackerras, Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*) Ilia (*Idomeneo*) e Marzelline (*Fidelio*) per la serie Opera in English di Chandos, Nanetta (*Falstaff*) con sir John Eliot Gardiner, una serie di registrazioni di Gilbert e Sullivan con sir Charles Mackerras, e una registrazione solistica di brani italiani.

Peter Wedd ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama con il compianto William McAlpine e successivamente presso il National Opera Studio. È stato solista della Royal Opera, Covent Garden dal 1999 al 2001 ed è regolarmente ospite della Welsh National Opera. Come solista della Royal Opera ha cantato Yvain (*Gawain and the Green Knight*) e Kudrjas (*Kat'a Kabanová*), e è invitato a cattare il ruolo di Borsa (Rigoletto). Alla Welsh National Opera i suoi ruoli hanno compreso Don José (*Carmen*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) e Laça (*Jenůfa*).

Altre apparizioni nel Regno Unito e in Irlanda hanno compreso Federico (*L'Arlesiana*) e Pluto (*Orphée aux enfers*) per Opera Holland Park, Kyska (*Šarkatán*) e Julius (*I cavalieri di Ekebi*) al Wexford Festival, e Satyavan (*Savitri*) al Festival di Aldeburgh e ha riscosso grande successo nel ruolo di Rodolfo (*La bohème*) alla Royal Albert Hall di Londra. Peter Wedd ha cantato Tamino e Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*) per la European Chamber Opera oltre a Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) per il Lyric Theatre di Singapore.

È molto richiesto nei concerti e ha lavorato tra l'altro con la London Philharmonic, la

Royal Scottish National, City of London Sinfonia, la Northern Sinfonia e la Bournemouth Symphony. Peter Wedd ha partecipato ai Festival del Covent Garden e di Edimburgo e all'estero al Maribor Festival in Slovenia e al Cernier Festival in Svizzera.

La discografia per la serie Opera in English di Chandos comprende *Turandot*, *Jenůfa*, e *The Flying Dutchman*.

Nato in Inghilterra, figlio di padre ucraino e madre inglese, **Pavlo Hunka** si è laureato in lingue e ha lavorato come avvocato nel Regno Unito prima di intraprendere la carriera di cantante. Ha iniziato a studiare canto al Royal Northern College of Music di Manchester e si è perfezionato in Svizzera con la Kammersängerin Maria Sandulescu.

Ha interpretato molti dei principali ruoli del repertorio per baritono basso durante un contratto triennale a Basilea in Svizzera. Da allora ha cantato nella maggior parte dei principali teatri lirici del mondo, tra cui Parigi, Vienna, Monaco, Firenze, Amsterdam, Londra, Salisburgo, con direttori del calibro di Claudio Abbado, Jeffrey Tate, Semion Bychkov, Zubin Mehta, Peter Schneider e Mark Wigglesworth.

Il repertorio comprende Barak (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), il ruolo di protagonista nel *Wozzeck*, Golaud (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Barbablù (*Il castello del principe Barbablù*), Pizarro (*Fidelio*), Kaspar (*Der Freischütz*), il ruolo di protagonista ne *L'Olandese volante*, Lysiart (*Euryanthe*) e molti ruoli per baritono basso nel repertorio russo, wagneriano e italiano.

I momenti salienti delle ultime stagioni comprendono Shalokvity (*Khovanshchina*) e *The Capture of Troy* con la English National Opera, Zumbeltz a Bilbao, Dr Schön/Jack (*Lulu*) all'Opera di Bonn, il ruolo di protagonista nel *Falstaff*, Alberich (*Siegfried*) e Hunding (*Die Walküre*) per la Canadian Opera di Toronto, Tomski (*La dama di picche*) al Teatro Real di Madrid e Siskov (*Da una casa di morti*) all'opera di Ginevra.

Christopher Purves ha studiato lettere presso il King's College di Cambridge e poi si è esibito con l'innovativo complesso di rock and roll *Harvey and the Wallbangers* con cui ha effettuato alcune registrazioni. Allo scioglimento del gruppo nel 1988, ha ripreso a studiare canto con David Keren, Diane Forlano e Janice Chapman.

I suoi ruoli teatrali comprendono Figaro

(*Le nozze di Figaro*) per la Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera e Opera North; Marcello (*La Bohème*) per la Scottish Opera; Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*) per la Welsh National Opera e Opera North; il Podestà (*La gazza ladra*) per la Garsington Opera; Siegfried (*Genoveva*) e Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*) entrambi per Opera North. Ha creato il ruolo dell'Executioner nella *Ines de Castro* di James Macmillan e ha interpretato *Parthenogenesis* di Macmillan al Festival di Edimburgo, dove è comparso inoltre nelle vesti di Cecil nella *Maria Stuarda* diretta da sir Charles Mackerras.

I suoi impegni concertistici comprendono la Messa in do maggiore di Mozart ad Aix-en-Provence con i Sixteen, *Les Noces* di Stravinskij con Philippe Herreweghe a Bruxelles, i Vespri del 1610 di Monteverdi con Richard Hickox, *Apocalypse* di John Tavener ai Prom con la City of London Sinfonia, la *Passione secondo San Giovanni* con Paul Goodwin a Madrid, il *Messiah* con la Scottish Chamber Orchestra, *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* con la London Sinfonietta diretta da sir Simon Rattle, il *War Requiem* di Britten e la *Creazione* di Haydn con la Ulster Orchestra, *Belshazzar's Feast* con la English Northern Sinfonia diretta da Paul

Daniel, e Lucifero ne *La Resurrezione* di Handel per Paul McCreesh.

Christopher Purves ha interpretato il suo primo recital al Festival di Aldeburgh nel giugno 2004. La discografia comprende il ruolo di protagonista in titole in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Gottardo (*The Thieving Magpie*), e *Il flauto magico* entrambi per la serie Opera in English di Chandos.

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

Ashley Catling si è esibito in concerto alla Barbican Concert Hall, Royal Glasgow Concert Halls, Queen Elizabeth Hall, St John's Smith Square e St Martin in the Fields. Le interpretazioni più recenti comprendono la *Passione secondo San Matteo* nella Cattedrale di Winchester, un recital di brani di Britten per voce e arpa ad Aldeburgh e alcune tournée in Europa e America durante le quali ha interpretato e registrato la nuova opera per

video *Three Tales* di Steve Reich con il compositore.

Le interpretazioni comprendono *The Stargazer*, una nuova opera per tenore solista e orchestra di Lynne Plowman commissionata dai London Mozart Players, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) con Opera by Definition, *Die Fledermaus* alla Grand Opera House di Dublino, Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) per Opera Holland Park, John Millar Jnr in *Friend of the People* di David Horne per la Scottish Opera, Gawain nella prima mondiale di *Gawain and the Green Knight* di Lynne Plowman con Music Theatre Wales, e Tamino (*The Little Magic Flute*) con Opera North. La discografia comprende *Contrabandista*, e *L'Esule di Granata* per Opera Rara.

La **Philharmonia Orchestra**, una delle più grandi orchestre del mondo, è diretta per la sesta stagione consecutiva dal famoso maestro tedesco Christoph von Dohnányi, in qualità di Direttore Principale. In precedenza questa carica era appartenuta a Otto Klemperer e da allora l'Orchestra ha collaborato con nomi di prestigio come Lorin Maazel (Direttore Principale Associato), Riccardo Muti (Direttore Principale e Direttore Musicale),

Giuseppe Sinopoli (Direttore Musicale) e, attualmente, Kurt Sanderling (Direttore Emerito), Vladimir Ashkenazy (Direttore Laureato) e Sir Charles Mackerras (Direttore Principale Ospite), oltre che con artisti importanti come Wilhelm Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, Guido Cantelli, Herbert von Karajan e Carlo Maria Giulini. L'Orchestra continua a collaborare con direttori e solisti di fama mondiale, oltre ad attrarre nelle sue fila i giovani musicisti europei di maggiore talento.

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

I concerti dell'Orchestra sono trasmessi sempre più frequentemente da BBC Radio 3, incluso l'apparizione annuale in occasione dei BBC Proms. La Philharmonia Orchestra

gode di una reputazione a livello mondiale ed è l'orchestra sinfonica che ha inciso di più in tutto il mondo, con un catalogo di oltre 1000 incisioni, tra cui una serie di colonne sonore per film e televisione. La sua discografia include, per Opera Rara, numerosi dischi di recital, oltre a undici opere complete, e nella serie Opera in English per Chandos, sponsorizzata dalla Peter Moores Foundation, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Wozzeck*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Aida*, *La Bohème*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Turandot*, la *Tosca*, vincitrice di un premio, e vari album di recital, con assoli di arie d'opera eseguite da Bruce Ford, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny e John Tomlinson. La Philharmonia Orchestra continua a consolidare la sua fama internazionale con frequenti tournèe e attraverso le recenti, prestigiose residenze presso il Châtelet Théâtre Musical di Parigi, il Megaron di Atene e il Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts di New York.

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.

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.

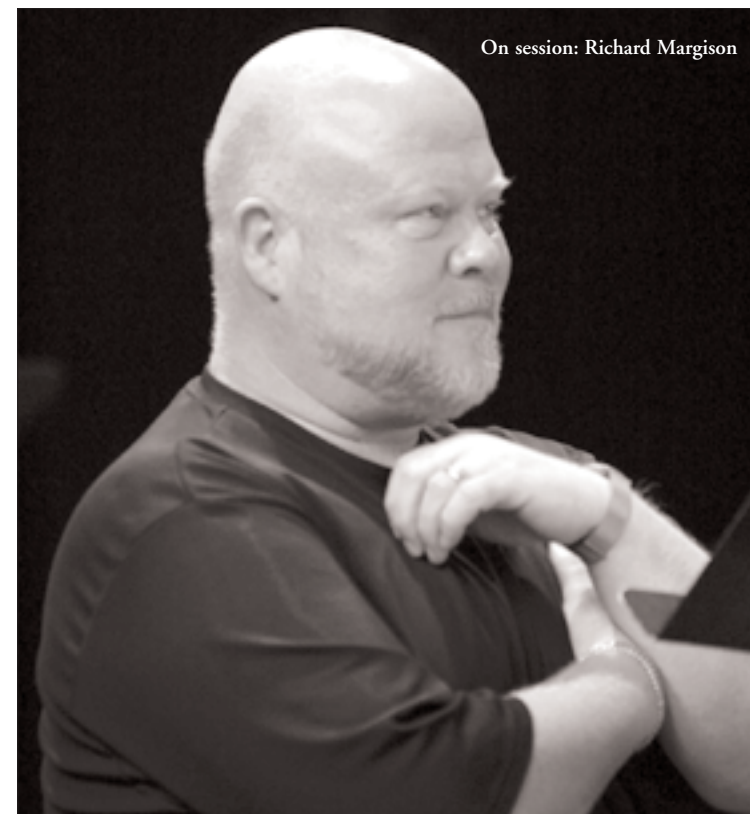
Il suo lavoro in studio di registrazione comprende la produzione della BBC di *Der Vampyr* di Marschner nonché ventotto registrazioni operistiche complete con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation. Tra questi vi sono numerosi dischi per l'etichetta Opera Rara che hanno vinti parecchi premi, tra

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 Sir Thomas Allen, Bruce Ford, Alan Opie, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Barry Banks, 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.



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On session: Robert Lloyd



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On session: Rebecca Evans



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On session: Peter Wedd



On session: Pavlo Hunka

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 Overture

Act I

The courtyard of a State Prison. In the background is the main gate, and a battlement towering over the tree. Within the closed gate there is a small wicket which can be opened to admit pedestrians. By the gate is the porter's lodge. The wings on stage let show the living quarters of the prisoners; all the windows have bars, and the numbered doors have iron reinforcements and heavy bolts. In the farthest downstage wing is the door to the warder's house. On the right are trees, protected by iron railings, next to which is a garden gate indicating the entrance to the castle gardens.

Scene 1

No. 1. Duet

Jaquino (*in love, wringing his hands*)

2 These people could drive you berserk!
My darling, at last we're together!

Marzellina (*carrying on with her work*)

But I must get on with my work –
I know you, you'll go on for ever.

Jaquino

You beast, you can spare me a word.

Marzellina

Well, say what you came here to say,
but don't be absurd.

Jaquino

My words seem to stick in my gullet,
you look at me full of contempt.

Marzellina

Speak up, you are being pathetic,
you won't get a second attempt.

So say what you came here to say,
then leave me in peace for the day.

Jaquino

So hear what I came here to say,
and then you can send me away.

I... I asked you... suggested...
that we could get married.

Remember?

Marzellina

How could I forget?

Jaquino

If... if you should... accept my proposal...
Say 'yes' then...

Marzellina

I've not said it yet.

Jaquino

It won't take so long to arrange things...

Marzellina

What cheek! So you've settled the day?
You cheeky boy, so you've settled the day?

Jaquino

It won't take so long to arrange things...

(*Someone knocks.*)

Oh damn them, they keep interrupting.

Jaquino

Oh, damn them, they keep interrupting,
and just when it's all going right,
my quarry vanishes out of my sight,
my quarry has gone,
it vanishes out of my sight.

Marzellina

Well, that's got him out of the way.
His love is a pitiful sight.

I've hurt him, and that is not right.

(*Jaquino goes to open the door.*)

I can't bear to see how he suffers.

I'm sorry I've hurt him, poor boy!

Fidelio fills me with longing,
to love him is heavenly joy.

Jaquino (*returning, aside*)

Where was I?
She's turning her back!

Marzellina (*aside*)

Already! Another attack!

Jaquino (*to her*)

So, why won't you give me your answer?
I can't wait any longer to know.

Marzellina (*aside*)

Oh, why must he make me be cruel?
(*to him*)

My answer for this time and always and ever
is no.

(*aside*)

I've struck him a terrible blow.
For always and ever it's no.

Jaquino

Your heart must be harder than steel.
I plead and I beg, you don't care what I feel.

Marzellina (*aside*)

If I do not lay down the law,
he'll clutch at the tiniest straw.

Jaquino

So, you mean that you'll never, never accept me?
Is that it?

Marzellina

Go on, on your way.

Jaquino

What? I'm not allowed even to look at you?
In silence?

Marzellina

All right, you can stay.

Jaquino

So what has become of your promise?

Marzellina

My promise? I did no such thing.
That is a dreadful thing to say.

(*knocking again*)

Jaquino

Damnation, yet more interruptions.

Marzellina (*aside*)

Thank God, now he must go away.

That sound has saved me again.

Jaquino (*aside*)

I'm sure that she really was moved.

Maybe my chances have improved.

Marzellina

It hurts me to cause him such pain.

Dialogue

Jaquino

That must have been the two hundredth time today!

Now, can we have a word in peace?

Rocco (*offstage*)

Jaquino!

Marzellina

Father wants you... it's probably about Fidelio.

Jaquino

Oh, Fidelio! Of course!

Rocco (*offstage*)

Jaquino?

Jaquino

I'm coming.

Marzellina

Poor Jaquino... I used to be so fond of him, but since Fidelio came, I feel like a new person in a new world.

No. 2. Aria

Marzellina

[3] If only we could marry today,
I could express my feelings.
There is so much I dare not say,
so much my heart's concealing.
As wife, no blush need hide my face
when I desire your warm embrace:
alone you shall caress me.
(*She sighs and lays a hand on her breast.*)

That hope engulfs my heart with fire,
with fierce unearthly sweet desire,
such happiness shall bless me,
such blissful happiness shall bless me.
To simple, calm domestic life
I wake up ev'ry morning.
The husband sweetly greets his wife,
each day their passion warming.
And when the routine work is done,
the velvet dusk of night has come,
alone you shall caress me.
That hope engulfs my heart with fire,
with fierce unearthly sweet desire,
such blissful happiness, joy shall bless me.

(*Rocco comes out of the garden. Jaquino has some gardening tools with him, and takes them into the house.*)

Dialogue

Rocco

Where has Fidelio got to?

It's nearly time for me to take the Governor his post.

Marzellina

Here he is.

(*Leonora is wearing a dark jacket, a red waistcoat, trousers, short boots, a broad black leather belt with a copper buckle. Her hair is hidden in a net hood. On her back she has a sack with provisions, and in her arms she carries some chains which she drops at the porter's lodge. At her side hangs a tin box on a strap.*)

Rocco

There you are!

Poor boy, you've earned your keep today!

Leonora

I won't deny it – I'm tired.

The smith worked for such a long time on these chains.

Rocco

What did they cost?

Leonora

Here's the exact account.

Rocco

You're a clever fellow...

With prices like these we can double our money...

Leonora

I do my best.

Rocco

You're a good lad, you'll get your reward.

Leonora

I wasn't thinking of any reward.

Rocco

Don't worry... do you think I can't see into your heart?

No. 3. Quartet

Marzellina (*while Rocco examines Leonora with approval, Marzellina watches and sings to herself*)

[4] A wonder, clear and pure
has gripped my heart with fear.
He loves me, I am sure,
a happy life is near.

Leonora (*aside*)

Can slender hopes endure.
When danger's so severe?
She loves me, that is sure,
my heart is full of nameless fear.

Rocco (*during the above, Rocco comes downstage and sings to himself*)

She loves the boy, that's sure,
her way ahead is clear.
This couple will endure.
Their life of happiness is so near,
their happy married life is near.

Jaquino (*watching them and gradually moving to the side, somewhat behind the others*)
 So what is his allure?
 Why does her father cheer?
 I feel so insecure,
 alone and full of fear.

Dialogue

Rocco

Fidelio, I may have no idea who you are or where you come from, but I mean to make you my son-in-law.

Marzellina

Soon?

Rocco

Oh, not so hasty!
 The Governor has to make his report; the day after he leaves we'll have you married.

Leonora

Tomorrow!

Rocco

Now look, children, you're in love, I can see that, but that's not all you need for a happy home.

No. 4. Aria

Rocco

- 5 If you don't save up your money, happiness is hard to find.
 Being poor is never funny,
 life becomes a tedious grind.

But when you can jingle the coins in your purse,
 your future will always look sunny.
 For love and power, for better or worse,
 can always be purchased for money.
 Since all the world is bought and sold,
 the finest thing to have and hold is gold, yes, gold.
 If you marry naught with zero,
 you'll give birth to even less.
 Love won't feed your hungry hero,
 and a hungry man means stress.
 But if you've a nice little sum in the bank,
 you're rich, and your marriage is rosy:
 a sweetheart to cuddle and father to thank
 that you can grow old, warm and cosy.
 Since all the world is bought and sold,
 the finest thing to have and hold is gold, yes gold.

Dialogue

Leonora

That's easy for you to say; for me the source of true happiness lies in the union of two passionate souls, but even more important for me at the moment is your trust. When you come home from work in the cells you're always worn out. Won't you let me help you?

Rocco

The Governor is a stickler for the rules, but I think I can persuade him to let you help in the cells. Apart from one that is...

Marzellina

Is that the prisoner you've spoken about?

Leonora

Has he been here long?

Rocco

About two years.

Leonora

He must be a dangerous criminal.

Rocco

Or have powerful enemies. It comes to much the same thing.

Marzellina

Why is he here?

Rocco

The less we know, the better. He can't survive much longer.

Leonora (*aside*)

God help me!

Rocco

I've been cutting his rations – Governor's orders, of course! In the last twenty-four hours he's had nothing but a scrap of bread and half a glass of water.

Marzellina

Father, whatever you do, don't take Fidelio down there. He couldn't bear to see such misery.

Leonora

Why ever not? I have courage and strength!

Rocco

That's the spirit!

No. 5 Trio

Rocco

- 6 Good, that's the stuff...
 You must be tough,
 for real life is gritty.
 But daily grind
 Makes heart and mind
 impervious to pity.

Leonora (*vigorously*)

I shall be bold, ruthless and cold
 in spite of fear around me.
 Gives me the steel, love's high ideal,
 to face the horrors all around me.

Marzellina (*affectionately*)

This hateful role
 your noble soul
 will surely suffer harder.
 But you'll return
 and love will burn,
 with even fiercer ardour.

Rocco

I see your fortune surely grow.

Leonora

I put my trust in God and justice.

Marzellina

Look in my eyes: their light is shining.
 That love is power, it will endure.

Rocco

I see your fortune growing.

Leonora

I put my trust in God and justice.

Marzellina

Our happiness is sure.

Leonora

My happiness is sure.

Rocco

Their happiness is sure.

Rocco

It's up to him!
I'll get the Governor's permission
for you to help me in the jail.

Leonora

I shall not rest until your mission
has been accomplished: do not fail!

Marzellina

Papa, the sooner you can ask him
the sooner I shall be his wife.

Rocco

I'll get permission for you
to help me in the jail.
One foot is in the grave already.

Leonora

My will is weak, my nerve unsteady.
Come hope, I need your calming breath.
Come, hope, bring your calming breath.

Rocco

I am worn out and close to death.
I have a premonition,

Marzellina (*affectionately*)

But dearest father that can't be true.
Your loving children depend on you.

Rocco

If we take care,
the chance is there,
to fill your cup to over-flowing.

Marzellina

If you will dare
then we can share
in joy beyond all knowing.

Leonora

What I shall dare
to spite despair
wins joy beyond all knowing.

I gave my hand,
by that I stand,
though bitter tears are flowing.

Rocco

Give her your hand,
and proudly stand
while tears of joy are flowing.

Marzellina

I proudly stand
to give my hand
while sweetest tears are flowing.

Scene 2

[7] No. 6 March

During the March, which has already begun, the main gate is opened from outside. Officers march in with a platoon, followed by Pizarro, and the door is then closed again.

Dialogue

Pizarro (*examining the post*)

This handwriting seems familiar. 'Dear Friend, the Minister has been informed that among your prisoners are some who are the victims of illegal detention. He is setting off tomorrow in order to carry out a surprise inspection.' If he realised that the Florestan who so mysteriously disappeared is actually rotting here in chains... Well, there is one solution.

No. 7. Aria with choir

Pizarro

[8] Ah! This is ecstasy!

To satisfy my vengeance,
Fate summons you to bleed,
to hack his flesh in pieces
titanic, glorious deed.
He almost overcame me,
to mock me and defame me,
to make me writhe
in the dust beneath his feet.
Now let him howl in anguish.
the victor I shall vanquish.
And as I stand beside him

and twist the knife inside him,
I scream into his ear:
I've won, I've won, I've won,
mine is the vict'ry here!

Chorus of Sentries

He raves with wild elation
of death and mutilation.
To watch him is to fear,
he raves, to watch him is to fear.

Pizarro

Ah, this is ecstasy!
My fury will be sated,
now let him howl in anguish.
The victor I shall vanquish.
Ah, this is ecstasy!
To satisfy my fury,
Fate summons you to bleed.
The victory is mine, yes, it's mine.

Chorus of Sentries

He raves with wild elation
of death and mutilation.
To watch him is to fear,
he raves, to watch him is to fear.

Dialogue

Pizarro

Sergeant! Take a trumpeter up to the tower
and keep watch on the road from Seville. As
soon as you see the Minister's outriders give a
signal.

No. 8. Duet

Pizarro

- 9 Now, Warder, listen!
An urgent mission!
You make the right decision
and you're a wealthy man.
(*giving him money*)
Take this, a small advance.

Rocco

So tell me, tell me quickly,
for that I'd take a chance.

Pizarro

So many brutal dealings
blunted your finer feelings.
No squeamish qualms can haunt a warder.

Rocco

What is it? Tell me!

Pizarro

Murder!

Rocco (*startled*)

What?

Pizarro

Don't look so amazed.
You're scared? But you'll obey?
Be warned, it's now or never:
a danger to the State,
before it is too late,
must be dispatched for ever.

Rocco

Oh, Sir!

Pizarro

Do not delay,
(*aside*)
I dare not leave him living,
he knows too much for me.
Alive, he makes me nervous,
his death will set me free.
Alive, he always makes me nervous.

Rocco

His rage is unforgiving,
but how can I agree?
If I myself must murder,
it's gone too far for me.
To kill is not my duty,
my job is guarding the gaol.

Pizarro

Then I shall do the killing,
Your nerve, it seems, would fail.
Be quick, or they have caught us:
go down to the secret quarters
you know... you know...

Rocco

That living death
who's like a corpse with breath?

Pizarro (*grimly*)

Yes, him!
Go to the cell.

Under the floor there is a well.
When it is open give the signal.
That is his grave!

Rocco

And then? And then?

Pizarro

Then with my cloak about my face
I'll come, his assassin:
(*He shows the dagger.*)
I strike, and he is dead!

Rocco

Starvation, thirst and torture,
his body wracked with pain!
So let the knife release him
and set him free again.

Pizarro

To terminate his torture
is something of a shame.
But once he has been silenced,
I will be safe again.

(*He exits into the garden; Rocco follows.*)

(*Leonora alone, in a state of violent emotion.*)

No. 9. Recitative and Aria

Leonora

- 10 Vile murderer! Sadistic swine!
What is this plan?
What base, perverted act is brewing?
No cry for help, no plea for mercy,
does nothing touch your evil mind?

I know your heart's a sea of hatred,
raging and anger there I find.
I see a glorious rainbow arching.
It sheds its rays on all mankind.
Its light is calm, serenely falling,
nostalgic memories recalling
of long-forgotten peaceful time.

- 11 Come hope, you faint and distant star,
last ray of light for those in fear and anguish.
Oh, come, make bright my way, be it so far,
the pow'r of love will surely vanquish.
Come, oh come, star of hope,
distant star of hope.
For all who must live in fear and anguish,
make bright my way, be it so far,
that love, will surely vanquish.
My inner voices fire me,
I will not bend nor ever yield:
duty and love inspire me
I will not yield,
for duty and undying love inspire me.
Oh you, for whom I can bear all,
if only I could trace you
where evil holds you in its thrall,
and in my arms embrace you.

(*She exits into the garden.*)

(*Marzellina comes out of the house. Jaquino follows her.*)

Dialogue

Jaquino

- 12 But Marzellina... I was always your dear Jaquino...

Marzellina

So you were. But since Fidelio came here I have learned what true love really is.

Jaquino

What? With some passer-by who came from God knows where...

Marzellina

...and who was poor and needed help... and whom I am going to marry.

Jaquino

That's what you think!

Rocco

Quarrelling again?

Marzellina

He keeps insisting that I should marry him.

Rocco

What? You think I would marry my only daughter to a nothing like you?

Leonora

Master Rocco!

You've promised so many times to allow the prisoners out for some air and exercise. The Governor will never know... and it's such a beautiful day.

Marzellina

Oh, yes, do let them.

Rocco

You're right, just this once we can afford to take the risk. Jaquino, open up the ordinary cells.

(Rocco goes off into the garden. Leonora and Jaquino open the cell doors, and then go into the background with Marzellina to watch the prisoners coming out.)

No. 10. Finale

(During the prelude the prisoners gradually fill the stage.)

Chorus

¹³ Oh, what delight
to breathe the air
of freedom in our being!
Oh, what delight,
the sun our senses freeing;
the dungeon reeks of death.

First Prisoner

We trust that God will aid us.
We know His love has not betrayed us.
For hope still whispers of release,
we shall be free, we shall find peace.

Chorus

Oh, heaven! Rescue!
Noble theme!
Oh freedom may we still dream?

(An officer appears on the wall, and then vanishes.)

Second Prisoner

Speak softly, we are overheard.
The pow'rs that be hear ev'ry word.

Chorus

Speak softly, we are overheard.
Ev'ry word. The powers above hear ev'ry word.

(Before the chorus is completely ended, Rocco appears in the background, and talks urgently with Leonora. The prisoners gradually disappear into the garden. Marzellina and Jaquino follow them. Rocco and Leonora come downstage.)

Leonora

¹⁴ What did he say?

Rocco

The news is good.
I put the case as best I could,
and told him of our plan and asked permission,
but his reply was a shock:
your wedding may take place at once, and in addition
from today you're cleared for work inside the prison block.

Leonora *(breaking out)*

Already! Already!
Oh, I am glad, I feel so happy!

Rocco

You're very open-hearted,
and we've a job to do.
We'll go down and get started.

Leonora

Go down? Where to?

Rocco

The man who's nearly dead.
For weeks I've fed him nothing,
yes, nothing but some scraps of bread.

Leonora

Ah! Are we going to free him?

Rocco

Oh no!

Leonora

What then? What then?

Rocco *(mysteriously)*

Not in that sense.
He will be, shall we say, be saved.
I think it providential,
but keep it confidential,
we must prepare his grave.

Leonora

So he is dead?

Rocco

Not yet, not yet.

Leonora *(recoiling)*

Are you to murder him as well?

Rocco

No, my dear fellow can't you tell?
I'm careful, I keep my conscience clear.
I'm sure the Governor himself will strike the blow.
Our job is just to dig his grave.

Leonora (*aside*)

To dig the grave for one I married,
brutal torture can't be worse.

Rocco

He will be better dead and buried,
to give him food would make things worse.

Leonora

What?

Rocco

[15] Let's down to work, for time is pressing,
we need your help, the task's depressing.
Work! Work! For a jailer, life is hard.

Leonora

I'll follow you till death us part.

Rocco

We have to open the cistern.
Then throw the body in its grave.
I don't like it any more than you do,
you'll find it gruesome, but be brave.

Leonora

It's just I've never touched a corpse,
No, I've never touched one before.

Rocco

I'd rather spare you such a chore,
but I am old and growing frail;
the master's strict, I dare not fail.

Leonora (*aside*)

It breaks my heart.

Rocco

The boy is crying, poor boy, I think he's crying.
(*aloud*)

No, no, you stay here, there's no denying
it is too much, you stay here,
yes, that is no place for boys like you.

Leonora (*desperately pleading with him*)

I have to come, I have to see that wretched victim,
no matter what I have to suffer,
I have to come though it will tear my heart in two.

Rocco

No, no, you stay here!

Leonora and Rocco

So that's resolved, we're on our way:
When duty calls, we must obey.

(*Jaquino and Marzellina rush in.*)

Marzellina

[16] Oh, father, do be quick!

Rocco

What's gong on?

Jaquino

Get out of sight.

Rocco

But what is wrong?

Marzellina

Pizarro's in extreme alarm:
he's shouting with rage at you.

Jaquino

Yes, she is right.

Leonora

Let's get away.

Rocco

Will someone say that he knows they're out.

Leonora

Yes, without a doubt.

Marzellina

One of his men has told him the pris'ners are
walking in the garden.

Rocco

Then get them back –
I'll ask his pardon.

Marzellina

He rages like a Titan,
he loses all control.

Leonora (*aside*)

Dear God, I am so frightened,
it shakes me to the soul.

Rocco (*aside*)

My decision was enlightened,
so let him take his toll.

Marzellina

He rages like a Titan,
He loses all control.

(*Marzellina exits after Jaquino.*)

Pizarro

[17] Presumptuous idiot, who are you to take such a
liberty with me?
What right have you to let an apprentice go out
and set the pris'ners free?

Rocco (*in confusion*)

But Sir! But Sir!

Pizarro

Speak up! Speak up!

Rocco (*looking for an excuse*)

The sun is shining,
it is the festive month of May,
and...

(*composing himself*)

surely you don't need reminding,
it is a very special day?

(*taking his cap off*)

Today's the King's official birthday.
That we must surely celebrate.

(*softly to Pizarro*)

Your victim dies, so let the others be free
to walk out in the sunshine.
Save your anger for the man you hate.

Pizarro (*softly*)

Go dig his grave and dig it deeper;
here I want peace, and you're its keeper.
Get the pris'ners under lock and key,
and don't dare take liberties with me.
No, never take liberties with me.

Chorus of prisoners (*returning from the garden*)

- [18] Farewell, the warm and radiant light,
our glimpse of day is fading.
The darkness all-pervading
surrounds our lives in endless night.

Marzellina (*watching the prisoners*)

How eagerly they sought the light,
how sadly they're parading.
God help them, their life is so degrading,
how can my joy and love be right?

Leonora (*to the prisoners*)

You must obey: get out of sight.
your dream of bliss is fading.
(*aside*)

Oh, this is so degrading,
is there no justice? Will no one stand and fight?

Jaquino (*to the prisoners*)

You must obey: get out of sight.
Down there your cells are waiting.
(*observing Rocco and Leonora*)
What are these two debating?
They have some plot in mind tonight.

Pizarro

Now Rocco, work with all your might.
Don't keep our victim waiting.
(*aside, watching the others*)
Stay there till you have put him
deep in his grave and out of sight.

Rocco

Yes, Sir, I'll work with all my might.
The cistern will be waiting.
No, I dare not frustrate him;
I'll do my job, thought that's not right.

(*The prisoners return to their cells, which Leonora and Jaquino lock behind them.*)

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act II

A dark, underground dungeon. On the left is a cistern covered with stones and rubble. In the background are various openings blocked by iron bars, through which one can see a staircase leading from above. On the right are the last few steps, and the door into the cell. A lamp is burning.

Scene 1

Florestan sits on a stone. Around his body is a long chain which is fixed to the stone at one end.

No.11 Introduction and Aria

[1] Introduction

Aria

Florestan

- [2] God! The darkest hour,
when silence howls with tension.
Here this lifeless waste,
here, nothing lives but me.
Unending torture!

Yet I trust in God's intention.
I shan't complain,
for all I suffer comes from Thee.

- [3] In the spring of youthful promise
I had all my hopes destroyed.
I spoke out the truth too rashly,
now I perish in this void.
Though I suffer degradation,
pain and joy to me are one,
in the trust and consolation
that my duty has been done,
(*with rapture bordering on madness, but nonetheless calm*)
What breezes are stirring to sweeten the night?
What vision arises before me?
Angelic, it hovers, a creature of light
whose tender caresses restore me.
My angel Leonora, my angel,
my love who leads me
to freedom in heaven above.
(*Exhausted by his excited movements, he sinks down onto the stone with his face in his hands.*)
(*By the light of a lamp Rocco and Leonora can be seen coming down the stairs, carrying a jug and digging tools. The door into the cell opens, and half the stage is illuminated.*)

No. 12 Melodrama and Duet

Leonora (*under her breath*)

- [4] How cold it is in these dungeons.

Rocco

Well, yes of course... they're very deep.

Leonora (*looking anxiously around*)

I began to think we would never find the entrance.

Rocco (*going to Florestan's side*)

He's over there.

Leonora (*with a broken voice, trying to recognise him*)

He doesn't seem to move at all.

Rocco

Maybe he's dead.

Leonora (*shuddering*)

You think so?

(*Florestan makes a movement.*)

Rocco

No, no, he's sleeping.
So much the better – we can get on with our work.
There's no time to lose.

Leonora (*aside*)

It's impossible to make out his features.
God give me strength if it really is him.

Rocco (*puts his lantern down on the rubble*)

That cistern I told you about is somewhere under this rubble.
We won't have to dig far to find the opening.
Give me the pick, and stand nearby.

(*He goes down in the hole as far as his midriff, puts the jug down, and lays his bunch of keys down*)

beside him. Leonora stands at the edge, and gives him the pick.)

You're trembling. Are you frightened?

Leonora (*forcing herself to sound confident*)
No, no. It's only that it's so cold.

Rocco (*quickly*)
The get to work.
That'll soon warm you up!

Duet
(*During the introduction, Rocco sets to work, and while he is bent down, Leonora uses the opportunity to observe the prisoner.*)

Rocco (*sotto voce, while he's working*)
[5] Now bend your back, let's see you working,
it won't be long before he's here.
Now bend your back, let's see you working.

Leonora (*likewise working*)
I'll never let you think I'm shirking,
I'll do my share, you need not fear.

Rocco (*trying to lift a large stone at the entrance*)
Come here, this stone, let's see if we can shift it.
Take care, take care it's quite a weight

Leonora (*helping to lift it*)
I've got it now.
Let me try, and I will see if I can shift it.

Rocco
Another push!

Leonora
Take care!

Rocco
It moved!

Leonora
Now once again!

Rocco
It's quite a weight...

Leonora
Just one more try.

(*They let the stone roll away over the rubble, and draw breath.*)

Rocco (*carrying on with the work*)
Now bend your back, let's see you working,
it won't be long before he's due.

Leonora
Just let me catch my breath a moment,
there is not so much more to do.
(*carrying on with the work*)
(*aside, trying to see the prisoner*)
Though you may be a total stranger,
by God, you will come out alive.
I swear I'll save you from the danger,
you shall be free, you shall survive.

Rocco (*suddenly standing up*)
Come on boy, duty must come first.

Leonora (*getting back to work*)
I'm ready now, another burst.

I'll never let you think I'm shirking.
Just let me catch my breath a moment,
then you will see what I can do.

Rocco
It won't be long before he's due.

(*Rocco drinks. Florestan recovers and lifts his head, without turning towards Leonora.*)

Dialogue
Leonora
He's awake!

Rocco
Did you manage to get some rest?

Florestan
How could I?
Do you still refuse to hear my story?

Leonora (*aside*)
God, it's him!

Rocco
My job is to follow orders.

Florestan
Surely you can tell me who is the Governor of the prison.

Rocco
It's Don Pizarro.

Florestan
The one whose crimes I exposed. If you want to

help me, send a message to Leonora Florestan...
Tell her I am lying here in chains.

Rocco
I would just destroy myself without helping you at all.

Florestan
Then if I have to die here, let me die quickly...

Rocco
I've got a little wine left over. Fidelio... give him this.
(*to Leonora*)
You seem to very upset.

Leonora
Who wouldn't be?

Rocco
It's true, there's something about his voice.

Leonora
It pierces my heart.

No. 13 Trio
Florestan

[6] In a better world, they surely shall applaud you,
for God in His mercy has sent you to me.
My thanks at least are free,
That is the only way I can repay you,
the only way I can ever reward you.

Rocco (*lightly to Leonora, who he draws to his side*)
The wine I very gladly give,
poor man, he has not long to live.

Leonora (*aside*)

O heaven, still my beating heart,
with joy and pain it's torn apart.

Florestan (*aside*)

The boy seems almost moved to tears.

Leonora

O heaven, still my beating heart.
This is the hour of destiny
Which must bring death of victory,
yes, death if not victory.

Rocco

I dare not bend the rules too far,
no matter what my feelings are.

Florestan

And in his looks some hope appears
that I may yet find liberty,
that somehow fate will rescue me.

Rocco

No matter what my feelings are.

Leonora (*softly to Rocco, as she gets a piece of bread from her pocket*)

This scrap of bread I had it hidden,
though I had quite forgotten where...

Rocco

It would be kind, but I don't dare:
you know how strictly that's forbidden.

Leonora (*ingratiatingly*)

But, I know how kind you really are.

Rocco

Don't go too far.

Leonora (*as before*)

Not even in his dying hour?

Rocco

All right then, have your way!
I did not see it.

Leonora (*very moved, giving Florestan the bread*)

Here, take and eat this bread, unhappy man.

Florestan (*grasping Leonora's hand, and pressing it to him*)

My heartfelt thanks, my thanks...
In a better world they shall applaud you.

Leonora

May heaven come to your defence,
your freedom my reward:
the answer to my prayer,
your freedom be the answer to my prayer.
What they have done to him I cannot forgive.

Rocco

To see such pain my heart relents,
but breaking the rules is more than I can dare.
But still I'll do the best I can,
he'll soon be gone, the wretched man.
Poor man, he has not long to live.

Florestan

For in his mercy God sent you here.
My grateful thanks at least are free.

The boy seems almost moved to tears
and in his look some hope appears,
that I may yet find liberty.
My heartfelt gratitude is all I have to give.

Leonora

I know you will do all you can
to help this suff'ring man.

(*Florestan eats the bread.*)

Dialogue

Rocco

Everything's ready. I'll give the signal.

Florestan

Is that the signal for my death?

Leonora

No. Keep calm. Never forget that there is such a
thing as Providence.

(*Pizarro enters, wrapped in a cloak.*)

Pizarro

Is everything ready?

Rocco

Yes.

Pizarro

Keep out of the way.

Rocco

Shall I take off his chains?

Pizarro

No! Hurry – time is pressing.

No. 14 Quartet

Pizarro

[7] You perish!

But, let us be certain
you know who rips you with his knife:
revenge, tear down the secret curtain,
reveal who comes to take his life.

(*He throws open his cloak.*)

Pizarro, you'll regret your error,
Pizarro, when you scream in terror
for now my vengeance strikes.

Florestan (*calmly*)

A murderer!
A murderer's what you are!

Pizarro

I'll pay you blow for blow
for ev'rything you've said.
Speak up, in just a second you are dead...

(*He goes to stab Florestan.*)

Leonora (*rushing in with a piercing scream, and shielding Florestan with her body*)

Go back...

Florestan

Oh God!

Rocco

Oh no!

Leonora

...or kill me, for till my dying breath
I'll stand here to defend him
from your desire for death.

Pizarro (*hurling her aside*)
What impudence!

Rocco (*to Leonora*)
Get back!

Florestan
O God!

Pizarro
What impudence!
I'll see you hang for this,
yes, you will die for this.

Rocco
Get back! Are you mad?

Leonora (*once more shielding her husband*)
First kill his wife!

Pizarro
His wife?

Rocco
His wife?

Florestan
My wife?

Leonora (*to Florestan*)
Yes, I am Leonora!

Florestan
Leonora!

Leonora (*to the others*)
I am his wife,
I've sworn I shall save his life
and cast you down.
His overbearing will shall never win.

Florestan (*to Leonora*)
I'm overcome with joy,
and I feel my heart stand still.

Rocco
Such terror makes me ill!

Pizarro (*aside*)
Would you defy my will?
Ha ha, should I be thwarted by a woman?
(*once again threatening Leonora and Florestan*)
No, better to send the pair of them to hell.
You swore to share your lives in sickness and in
health,
so now fulfil your oath and share his death as well.

Leonora
You shall not approach him,
you'll have to kill me first.
(*suddenly drawing a pistol*)
Stay where you are, I have a gun!
(*The trumpet sounds from the tower.*)

Leonora (*her arms around Florestan's neck*)
Ah, you have been rescued, thanks to God.

Florestan

Ah, I have been rescued, thanks to God.

Pizarro (*stunned*)
Ha, that is the signal.
All is lost. I am ruined.

Rocco
What does that mean?
Give thanks to God!

(*The trumpet sounds again, louder.*)
(*Soldiers with torches appear at the grille at the top
of the steps.*)

Dialogue
Jaquino
Master Rocco! The Minister has arrived!

Rocco
Thank God for that!
We're coming, we're coming immediately...
Send someone down to escort the Governor out
of here.

Quartet
Leonora
In this, the hour of vengeance,
at last you have been saved.
The power of devotion
can make us cowards brave.

Florestan
In this, the hour of vengeance,
thank God, I have been saved.

The power of devotion
inspired us to be brave.

Pizzaro
I curse this hour of vengeance,
from which he has been saved.
For now he's free to mock me,
not rotting in his grave.

Rocco
I dread this hour of vengeance,
they'll know how I behaved.
But if I can be clever,
my skin may still be saved.

(*Pizarro rushes out. As Rocco leaves, he gives
Leonora a reassuring sign. The soldiers with torches
follow.*)

Dialogue
Florestan
You incomparable woman. What have you
endured for me?

Leonora
Nothing, dearest Florestan.

No. 15 Duet
[8] Oh joy beyond all understanding!
My husband in my arms!
How deeply we have suffered
for love's ecstatic charms.
And now I wrap my arms around you.
Oh, thanks to God for such sweet grace,
my dearest man, in my embrace.

Florestan

Oh joy beyond all understanding!
In Leonora's arms!
How deeply we have suffered
for love's ecstatic charms.
By God's great/ eternal mercy I have found you.
Oh, thanks to God for such sweet grace
my dearest wife in my embrace.
It's you!

Leonora

It is!

Florestan

Delirious excitement!

Leonora

It's you!

Florestan

It is!

Leonora

Delirious excitement!

Florestan

Leonora!

Leonora

Florestan!

Florestan

My Leonora!

Scene 2

The parade ground of the castle, with a statue of the King

(The castle guards march in and parade in an open square formation. Then the Minister Don Fernando enters from one side, accompanied by Pizarro and officers. The people hurry in. From the other side Jaquino and Marzellina lead in the prisoners, who kneel before Fernando.)

No. 16 Finale

Chorus of people

- 9 Hear! Hear! Hear how the world wildly rejoices to greet a long awaited dream.
Hear how the world wildly rejoices to praise the theme, the people's dream: that truth and justice join their voices to brand these gates of death obscene.

Fernando

- 10 My noble sovereign's will and order bid me to help all those in need.
I shall defeat the pow'r's of darkness which crush your lives with lust and greed.
No, you need not kneel in subjugation, *(The prisoners stand up.)*
I am a moderate, liberal man.
I count all people as my brothers, and seek to help them as I can.

Chorus of people and prisoners

Hear how the world wildly rejoices!
Hear! hear!

(Rocco pushes his way through the guards, with Leonora and Florestan behind him.)

Rocco

Then help these victims of oppression.

Pizarro *(to Rocco)*

You traitor! Go!

Rocco *(to Pizarro)*

That worries you?

Pizarro *(to Rocco)*

Be quiet!

Fernando *(to Rocco)*

We'll hear you.

Rocco

Have compassion,
unite this couple once again.
(presenting Florestan)
Don Florestan...

Fernando *(astonished)*

We thought him dead!
Noble soul who always fought for truth!

Rocco

And what he suffered you must know.

Fernando

My friend I thought was murdered?
In fetters, pale, but still alive.

Leonora

Yes, Florestan, he did survive.

Rocco

Yes, Florestan, he did survive.
And Leonora.

Fernando *(even more astonished)*

Leonora?

Rocco

I too can scarcely believe my eyes.
She came to me...

Pizarro

A word in private...

Fernando

Not now. She came...

Rocco

Yes, in disguise, and asked for work,
and was so convincing I took her on,
and even agreed that she could take my daughter's hand.

Marzellina

God help me!
How shall I ever understand?

Rocco

This monster's plan was that before you arrived
he'd kill him with his knife.

Pizarro *(enraged)*

With his assistance!

Rocco *(to Fernando)*

Yes, I admit that!
But your arrival saved his life.

Chorus

For crimes against humanity
that man shall pay the price.

Justice will draw her shining sword
against all men of vice.
*(At a signal from Fernando, Pizarro is led away by
the guards.)*

Fernando *(to Rocco)*

You were prepared to dig his grave,
now, unlock his chains and set him free.
But wait! You, noble wife, were true:
surely that task belongs to you.

Leonora *(taking the key, and with the deepest
emotion releasing Florestan from his chains: he
sinks into her arms)*

Oh God, oh what ecstasy!

Florestan

Is this the first breath of the free?

Fernando

Thy judgement, God, is merciful and just.

Marzellina and Rocco

You test us, you reward our trust.

**Chorus, Leonora, Marzellina, Florestan,
Fernando and Rocco**

¹¹ Oh God, oh God, what ecstasy!
Is this the breath to make us free?
Thy judgement, God, is strong and just,
you test us, you reward our trust.

All

Love alone redeems my/our story,
to defy the murderer's knife.

Chorus

¹² Let our voices tell the story
of a noble, loving wife.
See her triumph, see her glory;
liberty and love of life!

Florestan

Through your faith I live in freedom,
evil fears loves burning flame.

Leonora

It was love that gave me courage:
love treats terror with disdain.

Chorus

Come, let our hearts and minds be fired
by the courage she inspired.

Florestan *(stepping forward, and indicating
Leonora), then Chorus, Rocco, Marzellina,
Jaquino and Fernando*

May our voices tell the story
of a noble loving wife.
See her triumph, see her glory:
liberty and love of life.

Leonora *(embracing Florestan)*

Love, and love alone led me to glory,
to defy the murdered's knife.
Only love redeems my fearful story,
Florestan returns to life.

Translation by David Pountney



The Royal Opera's production of *Fidelio*

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BEETHOVEN: FIDELIO

SOLOISTS/PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA/PARRY

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Fidelio

Opera in two acts

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English translation by David Pountney

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Rocco, jailer	Robert Lloyd <i>bass</i>
Marzellina, his daughter	Rebecca Evans <i>soprano</i>
Jaquino, Rocco's assistant	Peter Wedd <i>tenor</i>
Don Pizarro, prison governor	Pavlo Hunka <i>bass-baritone</i>
Don Fernando, minister and Spanish nobleman	Christopher Purves <i>bass</i>
Florestan, a prisoner	Richard Margison <i>tenor</i>
Leonora, his wife, and assistant to Rocco, under the name of Fidelio	Christine Brewer <i>soprano</i>
First prisoner	Ashley Catling <i>tenor</i>
Second prisoner	Christopher Purves <i>bass</i>

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Geoffrey Mitchell Choir
David Parry

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