

CHANDOS

OPERA IN
ENGLISH

Bizet
THE PEARL FISHERS
HIGHLIGHTS

Rebecca Evans • Barry Banks • Simon Keenlyside • Alastair Miles

London Philharmonic Orchestra
Brad Cohen

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

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Georges Bizet

Georges Bizet (1838–1875)

highlights from
The Pearl Fishers

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Eugène Cormon and Michel Carré,
English translation by David Parry

Zurga, head fisherman

Nadir, fisherman

Leïla, priestess of Brahma

Nourabad, high priest of Brahma

Simon Keenlyside *baritone*

Barry Banks *tenor*

Rebecca Evans *soprano*

Alastair Miles *bass*

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Phillip Thomas *assistant conductor*

Brad Cohen

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from Act I		
[1] Prelude	1:54	[p. 70]
[2] No 1a, Introduction 'At the break of day with the waves at play' <i>Chorus</i>	3:32	[p. 70]
[3] No 1b, Scene and Chorus 'My friends, you must delay your dances' <i>Zurga, Chorus, Nadir</i>	4:03	[p. 70]
[4] No 1c, Recitative and Chorus reprise 'Stay here and live with us, Nadir' <i>Zurga, Nadir, Chorus</i>	2:14	[p. 71]
[5] No 2a, Recitative 'At last I have found you again!' <i>Zurga, Nadir</i>	2:37	[p. 72]
[6] No 2b, Duet 'Then from the holy shrine' <i>Nadir, Zurga</i>	7:11	[p. 72]
[7] No 4a, Recitative 'Hearing her voice my soul is a cauldron of passion!' <i>Nadir</i>	1:24	[p. 74]

	Time	Page
[8] No 4b, Romance 'Again her voice will haunt me'	3:11	[p. 74]
[9] No 5, Air and Chorus 'Brahma the god, sovereign of the world' <i>Leïla, Chorus, Nadir</i>	5:31	[p. 75]
from Act II		
[10] No 7, Recitative and Cavatina 'I am alone here in the night' <i>Leïla</i>	6:50	[p. 76]
[11] No 8, Chanson 'My love was weeping while she was sleeping'	1:53	[p. 76]
[12] No 9, Duo 'Leïla! Leïla!' <i>Nadir, Leïla</i>	6:49	[p. 76]
from Act III		
[13] No 11, Entr'acte, Recitative and Air 'The storm has run its course' <i>Zurga</i>	6:22	[p. 78]

	Time	Page
14 No 12a, Recitative '(She is here! My heart... is pounding...)' <i>Zurga, Leïla</i>	1:07	[p. 79]
15 No 12b, Duo '(I would speak, but I cannot)' <i>Leïla, Zurga, Chorus</i>	10:03	[p. 79]
16 No 14, Scene and Duo 'Spirits of dreadful night' <i>Nourabad, Chorus, Nadir, Leïla</i>	4:46	[p. 82]
Bonus tracks		
17 No 15, Trio (posthumous) 'Sacred light of being' <i>Leïla, Nadir, Zurga</i>	4:03	[p. 84]
18 No 2b, Duet (posthumous ending) 'Then from the holy shrine' <i>Nadir, Zurga</i>	5:19	[p. 85]
	TT 79:00	

On session: Brad Cohen



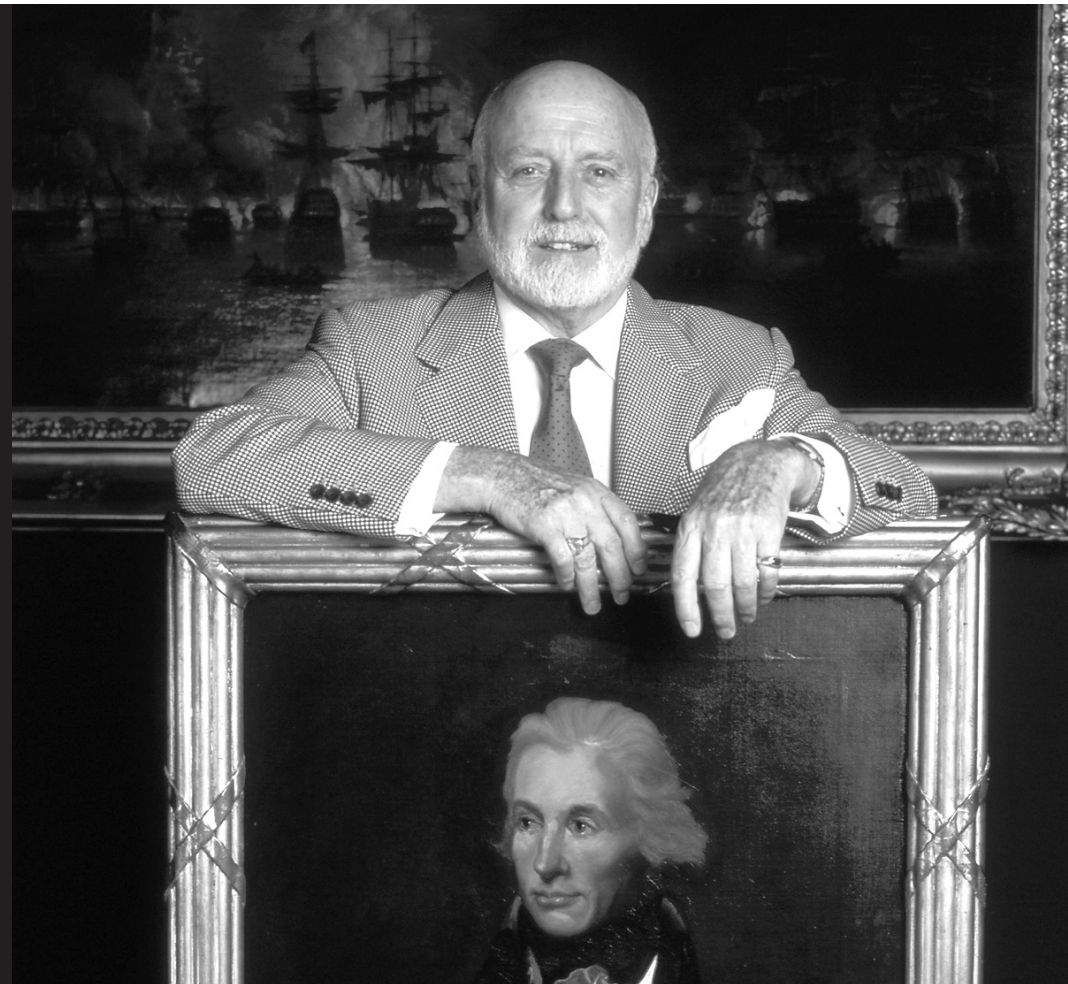
Everyone will recognise 'that famous duet' ('Then from the holy shrine') sung by the fishermen Nadir and Zurga, but how many of us are familiar with the other pearls of melody from Bizet's exotic opera? There surely is no better way of discovering the jewels in this romantic work than listening to the superb voices of Rebecca Evans, Barry Banks, Simon Keenlyside and Alastair Miles, with the Geoffrey Mitchell Choir and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, brought to life by Brad Cohen, conducting his new edition of Bizet's original score of 1863. Enjoy your pearl-listening!

Peter Moores

Sir Peter Moores, CBE, DL

September 2008

Sir Peter Moores with a portrait of Admiral Lord Nelson
by Lemuel Francis Abbott, acquired for Compton Verney
© Lyndon Parker



Les Pêcheurs de perles – a publishing history

Like many of Bizet's projects, *Les Pêcheurs de perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*) had at best a mixed success in his lifetime. It ran for eighteen performances in the autumn of 1863, then lay forgotten until after his death twelve years later. It was only the eventual success of *Carmen*, composed in 1873–4, which prompted Choudens, who published both that opera and *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, to re-examine their Bizet manuscripts with a view to exploitation. They eventually re-published *Les Pêcheurs de perles* with additions, alterations and omissions in the 1880s, although its modern performance success dates from the early twentieth century. This version was accepted for decades as representing Bizet's intentions, although it diverged in important respects from his own vocal score, published in 1863, which embodied the only version he authorised.

The posthumous version of the duet for Nadir and Zurga is, in my view, responsible for much of the criticism which has attached to *Les Pêcheurs de perles* in recent decades. The evanescent flute and harp theme from this duet was rightly recognised by Choudens as the most characteristic element of the opera. What they failed to comprehend, in adding a reprise of the theme at the end of the duet, was its larger purpose in the work. Its repetition so early in the

evening effectively closes its musical argument, and the ear has well and truly tired of the theme by the last of its subsequent appearances. Bizet's original idea, of suggesting the theme rather than driving it home, is more original, more theatrical – less hackneyed. It is an elegant interpretation of the Wagnerian leading motive, expressed through melody and timbre. In addition, the original duet ending (performed on this recording as track [9]) was one of the numbers received most favourably in 1863. Its intimacy and refinement create a quite different atmosphere from the noisy peroration of the posthumous version (track [18]).

The autograph of *Les Pêcheurs de perles* is presumed lost. However, a reduction of the full score on six staves, made for the performances in 1863, is held by the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris. My edition uses this in reconstructing the instrumentation of passages for which no autograph exists. Complemented by Bizet's published vocal score, it presents a clear and instructive framework for performing *Les Pêcheurs de perles* as Bizet composed it.

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(Editor, *The Pearl Fishers*, published by Peters Edition Ltd, London)

The Pearl Fishers

While Great Britain could lay claim to colonising ‘wider still and wider’ during the nineteenth century, it was surely France who more than anyone else channelled the exoticism of foreign lands into the arts, and certainly were supreme in representing oriental fictions on the operatic stage. The British, it must be said, were pretty good at *painting* the exotic, (albeit a bit later on) but the French beat them hollow as far as literature and music was concerned.

Surely opera was the ideal medium for portraying the imagined exotic? It combined literature, the visual arts and music, and could even add a smattering of reality – observed events – here and there. Above all it could triumph over other one-dimensional arts in fashioning *tableaux vivants*, where events could be enacted, enhanced by music, and most importantly danced, for we should not underestimate the increasingly central role of the costume-ballet in nineteenth-century French spectacle.

A word needs to be said about the notion of ‘exoticism’ of which orientalism was an important part, but not by any means

predominant. When we look at the repertoire of literature, painting, opera and ballet we can see exoticisms of the North and West as well as those which looked towards the East. For the French, anything ‘other’ was fair game for exploitation, usually in terms of national stereotyping.

As far as the Orient was concerned, various levels of musical evocation may be discerned. On the one hand there were composers who set operas on Exotic themes to music, making no attempt to adopt a style incorporating non-Western musical techniques. An example of this was the highly successful, but entirely Italianate, Opéra bouffe *Le Caïd* by Ambroise Thomas, a comic opera telling of an Arabic Kaid or chief.

At the other end of the scale were such composers as Félicien David (1810–1876) who noted down oriental melodies when on an extended tour of the Middle East and later published them. David achieved international acclaim for his Ode symphonique *Le Désert* of 1844 which incorporated quasi-Oriental melodies and techniques. Berlioz’s *Les Troyens à Carthage* (‘The Trojans in Carthage’) has little

oriental-sounding music, except for a sudden, highly effective chorus sung by the Nubian slaves.

Somewhere in between lay the norm of an all-purpose oriental style where the music used to represent Africa, India and even Japan and China were hardly distinguishable. Ubiquitous amongst musical techniques to evoke the East were drones, and rhythmic ostinati, as well as an extensive use of percussion complementing the use of shiny metal in the costumes. Finger-cymbals and tambourines were particularly favoured as were the use of the oboe and clarinet, and sometimes a piccolo topping, to mimic Eastern wind instruments, scales inflected with odd intervals and a liberal use of acciaccature and fioriture (crushing-notes and ornaments).

Considered within the expanding repertoire of Oriental operas (which culminated at the end of the century with such works as Massenet’s *Thaïs*) Bizet emerges as one of the first to find exotic musical languages to parallel exotic literary themes. In this respect *Les Pêcheurs de perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*) emerges as a pioneering work and the first where the young Bizet expressed a distinguishably individual voice, establishing a way of spicing up many of the expected

formulae of the Opéra-Comique (meaning the institution) with pseudo-oriental musical details which would lead on to the more concentrated oriental two-act opera *Djamileh* and of course to his other exotic (though Moorish rather than oriental) masterpiece *Carmen*.

The critics were unenthusiastic about the libretto for *Les Pêcheurs* which was to have been in the conventional Opéra-Comique format of an alternation of spoken material and sung numbers. But since the opera was premiered at the Théâtre-Lyrique, whose statutes did not require this combination, the dialogue was turned into recitative shortly before the premiere. Inevitably it was compared to the subject-matter of a now-forgotten opera *La Vestale* by Spontini, many times revived during the nineteenth century but whose popularity waned after 1850. Several of its numbers foreshadow similar movements in *Les Pêcheurs* in terms of the libretto, though not at all of the music.

One such is the prayer scene at the end of Act I (track 7) where Leïla prays to the Gods echoed by a backstage chorus. The use of the ‘coulisses’, the unseen backstage, was a tradition harking back to beyond the eighteenth century in Opéra-Comique

traditions: no self-respecting librettist-composer team would miss the opportunity to exploit them. In this case the backstage chorus echoes Leïla's words. Her sudden appearance in prayer is caught by Bizet by restricting the strings to a low-register cushion of sounds over which she flies, at first adding the ornamental flourishes which are oriental in their effect, but which, as the chorus begin to sing a conventionally balanced (and delightfully catchy) melody, turns into more typically Théâtre-Lyrique coloratura. Nadir sings, also unseen, marvelling at the sound of her voice. As he calls Leïla she too is shocked to hear him. Within the priestess's prayer, a love-duet is subtly woven in as the chorus moves into the ubiquitous and impossible 'Ah!' meant to be done, so says the score, *à bouche fermée* (with the mouth closed).

The opening of the Prelude to the opera (track [1]) has no oriental inflections to help set the scene: Bizet leaves that until later when an ostinato is accompanied by the ubiquitous tambourines and a chorus singing: in effect a danced *tableau vivant* (track [2]). Written as a piece with scenery, dance and song it once again combines French operatic convention with some all-purpose oriental dance music – nothing at all to do with the

Ceylon of the location. A feature which became one of Bizet's hallmarks in exotic music was the sudden introduction of strange, held chords, such as those on the word 'chants'. Another technique, already observed in Leïla's prayer, is to revert to unsullied Opéra-Comique convention in the central section. When the reprise of the first, more oriental, music occurs, it allows an extended orchestral passage to give the dancers time to display their talents: overall a brilliant formula to open the oriental spectacle with a combination of dance, song and an opulent set.

There follows the election of Zurga as chief for the time of the pearl-fishing season, (track [3]) narrated in a conventional recitative, and followed by a unison melody. Strange and powerful chords accompany the number where Zurga welcomes Nadir to the team of divers and perform a dance to the Sun to eliminate any evil spirits, (track [4]).

The approach to the celebrated duet 'Au fond du temple saint' ('Then from the holy shrine') dramatises the lifelong friendship between Nadir and Zurga, (track [5]). The two friends reminisce about their discovery of Leïla in the Holy Shrine. How cleverly Bizet modulates from brotherly discussion into this rose-tinted reminiscence! The harp well up in

the famous duet passage, and a slow melody accompanies in the orchestra: it is a theme – perhaps Leïla's theme – which will recur several times. The libretto has a typical cliché in oriental make-believes where Zurga remembers the moment when Leïla for a moment lifted her veil: 'Oh blessed sight! Oh rapture!' The slow hymn-like motive is stamped out on the brass for emphasis. The music becomes an affirmation of male friendship and a vow to chase away jealousy and passion. Appended is the posthumous ending which reiterates the hymn-like motive which accompanied the duet (track [6]).

The following scene is Nadir's, (track [7]). At first he admonishes himself for breaking his vows, accompanied by tremolando, disturbed harmonies on the strings. The music then subsides into a Romance where he conjures memories of Leïla in a gently lilting song. He thinks he has heard her voice in this berceuse-like aria, again in the typically Opéra-Comique style, beautifully and sparsely orchestrated. Here Bizet's subtle understanding of harmony comes to the fore, with a gently modal minor key giving an all-pervading atmosphere of memory tinged with longing, and a sense of the timelessness of a night of waiting. Then comes the scene already mentioned where Leïla prays,

followed by her Cavatine, which is preceded by a recitative, in which she waits for Nadir. The number is one of the most memorable moments of the opera even though it has no trace of oriental techniques (track [8]). It shows Bizet's mastery of the typical Opéra-Comique style aria, more than a little indebted to the style of Gounod. Nadir replies in the form of a Chanson (track [9]) which has far more of an exotic flavour. He approaches, singing from afar accompanied by offstage harps. Bizet became increasingly adept at using the *coulisses* not only dramatically but also musically: think of the passage in *Carmen* where Carmen dances the Romalis for Don José and the sounds of the bugles of his regiment are heard offstage.

Leïla, startled and drawn to him, hears him coming. The magical song turns into an Allegro molto 'beating heart' duet (track [10]) as they meet, the orchestra – by no means uniquely in the French opera repertoire – provides the heartbeat rhythms in this, one of the most extended through-composed scenes of the opera, ending in a more lyrical duet.

The first tableau from Act III is given to a solo from Zurga (track [11]) after the depiction of a storm in the orchestral introduction, full of swirling passages of harmony and underpinned by thunderous timpani. From the soliloquy

which follows it is clear that the storm was a metaphor for Zurga's own inner turmoils, and his recitative is punctuated by recurrences of the stormy music. He wins through to an attitude where he asks whether Nadir, his lifelong friend, can pardon him for his jealousy. Leïla appears (track [12]) throwing Zurga into turmoil. The hymn-like motive is heard in the background and Leïla has her aria that turns into a duet as she pleads for Nadir's life. At first forgiving, his turmoil causes him to change his mind as Leïla's veil is torn from her. He condemns them to death, asserting his regal power.

This through-composed movement was to become Bizet's way of moving the dramatic action forward to its conclusion: a technique he was again to use to masterful effect in *Carmen*, subverting yet expanding the traditional *opéra à numéros* of the Opéra-Comique. As the passion rises, Leïla curses the unforgiving Zurga and calls him a monster. The chorus has the final word.

An appendix is the 1893 Trio (track [17]) where both Nadir and Zurga sing of their love for Leïla who accepts them both. It is attributed to the composer Benjamin Godard.

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Synopsis (excerpts recorded are shown in bold type)

Act I

The action takes place on the island of Ceylon in the Indian Ocean, where the inhabitants live by diving for pearls. After a short **prelude** we see the fishermen and their families working, singing and dancing. **Zurga, head fisherman, reminds them that they should choose a leader, and they unanimously swear loyalty to him.**

Nadir, a young fisherman, appears and is recognized by Zurga as his old companion. On their travels, in a temple at Kandy, they had both fallen in love with the priestess. They had separated because of their rivalry, and swore never to see her again; but now they reaffirm their friendship, vowing that the memory of the priestess will not come between them.

Nourabad, the High Priest of Brahma, brings a priestess who has been chosen to pray for the fishermen on their forthcoming pearl fishing expedition, and to ward off evil spirits. Zurga imposes an oath of chastity upon her on pain of death. Their finest pearl will be her reward for keeping the divers safe from harm. **Although she is veiled, Nadir recognizes her voice as that of the priestess he**

loves, and left alone, he confesses that he has followed her here. He listens as Leïla begins her incantation, and he can resist no longer, calling out to her; she breaks off, answering his love.

Act II

The fishermen have returned safely, and Leïla is released from her vigil for the evening. As proof of her ability to keep her promise she tells the priest Nourabad how, as a little girl, she protected a fugitive and never revealed him to his pursuers. In gratitude, the man she saved gave her a necklace, which she wears to this day.

The priest leaves Leïla and she sings a cavatina, full of love. Nadir makes his way into the sacred enclosure and they are rapturously reunited. But they are observed and, as a violent storm breaks overhead, they are captured and denounced for sacrilege by Nourabad. Zurga tries to protect his friend from the fury of the superstitious natives, who demand his immediate death. Nourabad whips up their frenzy and Leïla's veil is torn from her. When Zurga recognizes her as the priestess from the temple in Kandy, he realises that Nadir has betrayed their oath to forget her and angrily demands death for the guilty couple.

Act III

Zurga's anger has passed and he sadly reflects on Nadir's fate. Leïla pleads for Nadir, saying that she alone was culpable. **For the first time she sees that Zurga loves her. He relents, but his jealousy reawakens when she shows how much she loves his rival.** Zurga lets Nourabad to take her to the sacrificial pyre. Before she goes, however, she gives Zurga a necklace to be sent to her mother. With a cry of recognition, he runs after them to save her.

The pearl fishers prepare for the ritual executions of Leïla and Nadir, to take place as the sun rises. At the last moment Zurga appears with the news that their camp is on fire, and the women and children are in danger. The fishermen rush off to save them. Zurga reveals to the captive couple that it was he that Leïla saved so many years ago, and that now he must repay his debt of gratitude for her bravery. He himself fired the camp in order to give them a chance to get away and, gratefully, Leïla and Nadir make their escape. Zurga is left alone to face the consequences of his actions.

Rebecca Evans (Leïla) was born in South Wales and studied at the Guildhall School



of Music and Drama. She received support from the Peter Moores Foundation to study with Ronald Schneider in Vienna. At the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, she has sung Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*),

Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*), and Johanna (*Sweeney Todd*). A regular guest at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, her roles there have included Ginevra (*Ariodante*), Despina, Zdenka (*Arabella*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*) and Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*). She has sung Despina at the Deutsche Staatsoper, Berlin; Ilia for the Netherlands Opera and, for English National Opera, Romilda (*Xerxes*), and Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*). A favourite at Welsh National Opera, her roles there have included Mimì (*La Bohème*), Pamina, Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) and Norina (*Don Pasquale*).

She has also established a major operatic career in America where she has sung Susanna and Zerlina for the Metropolitan Opera, New York; Susanna in Santa Fe; Pamina and Adèle (*Die Fledermaus*) for the Lyric Opera of

Chicago and Zerlina, Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) and Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) for San Francisco Opera.

In concert she has appeared at the BBC Proms and at the Salzburg, Edinburgh, Tanglewood and Ravinia Festivals. The orchestras she has worked with include the San Francisco Symphony, the Boston Symphony, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment with Sir Charles Mackerras, the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra with John Eliot Gardiner and the Sapporo Symphony Orchestra with Tadaaki Otaka.

A Grammy Award-winning artist, she has recorded prolifically, and her recordings for Chandos' Opera in English series include Gretel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Marzellina (*Fidelio*), and Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*). Other recordings for Chandos include Beethoven's Mass in C major and Delius' *Mass of Life*.

A graduate of The Royal Northern College of Music where he was a Peter Moores Scholar, **Barry Banks** (Nadir) has established himself as one of today's finest interpreters of the Italian *bel canto* repertoire. He is much in demand on the international opera platform, performing at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden,



The Metropolitan Opera, Opéra National de Paris, English National Opera, Théâtre du Châtelet, the Salzburg Festival, La Monnaie, The Santa Fe Opera and Teatro Comunale di Bologna amongst others. His roles include Lindoro (*L'italiana in Algeri*), Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*), Oreste (*Ermione*), Tom Rakewell, Tamino (*The Magic Flute*), Don Narciso (*Il turco in Italia*), Belfiore and Libenskof (*Il viaggio a Reims*), L'Astrologue (*Le Coq d'or*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) and Uberto (*La donna del lago*).

As a concert artist Barry Banks has sung Rossini's *Petite Messe solennelle* with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Daniele Gatti, Jaquino (*Fidelio*) with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Walter Weller, Bruckner's Requiem with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under Sir Charles Mackerras, and Rossini's *Armida* at the Edinburgh Festival under Carlo Rizzi. Other highlights have included Britten's *War Requiem* with the Orchestre Philharmonique

de Strasbourg under Jan Latham-Koenig, Rossini's *Ermione* in concert at Carnegie Hall and Donizetti's *I puritani* and *Linda di Chamoni* at Caramoor Festival.

Barry Banks' discography includes, for Chandos' Opera in English series, Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Giannetto (*The Thieving Magpie*) and Tamino (*The Magic Flute*) as well as a disc of Great Operatic Arias. Other recordings include *La Bohème*, *Un ballo in maschera* and *Trial by Jury*.



Simon Keenlyside (Zurga) was born in London, studied zoology at Cambridge and singing at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, where he was a Peter Moores Scholar.

He made his operatic debut at the Hamburg State Opera as Count Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*). He has since sung in Geneva (Hamlet and Pelléas), Zurich (Don Giovanni), Barcelona (Hamlet), Madrid (Posa), San Francisco (Pelléas), Sydney and Berlin (Figaro),

Brussels (Orfeo), Paris (Papageno, Pelléas, Guglielmo, Yeletsky and Dandini), Vienna (Figaro, Marcello, Count Almaviva, Billy Budd, Don Giovanni, Papageno and Posa), Munich (Marcello, Count Almaviva and Wolfram), at the Metropolitan Opera (Belcore, Marcello, Papageno and Count Almaviva), the Salzburg Festival (Guglielmo and Papageno), La Scala, Milan (Papageno and Count Almaviva), and at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (in roles including Billy Budd, Count Almaviva, Don Giovanni, Valentin, Pelléas, Guglielmo, Papageno, and Prospero in the world premiere of Adès' *The Tempest*). For Billy Budd at English National Opera and Winston in the world premiere of 1984 at the Royal Opera House, he won the 2006 Olivier Award for outstanding achievement in Opera.

Simon Keenlyside enjoys extensive concert work, and has appeared in recital in New York, San Francisco, Lisbon, Geneva, Moscow, Paris, Amsterdam, Rome, Brussels, London, at the Edinburgh, Aldeburgh, Salzburg and Munich Festivals, at La Scala Milan and in Vienna.

Recordings include recital discs of Schubert and Strauss, a disc of Schumann Lieder, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, the title role in *Don Giovanni*, *Carmina Burana*, Marcello in *La Bohème*, and Count Almaviva (*Le nozze*

di Figaro). A disc of orchestral arias won the *Gramophone* 2007 best recital award. Recordings for Chandos have included the title role in *Billy Budd*, and Papageno (*The Magic Flute*) as part of the Opera in English series.

Sheila Rock



Alastair Miles (Nourabad), is internationally recognised as one of the world's leading basses. He has sung at the Metropolitan Opera House (Giorgio in *I Puritani* and Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*); Opéra National de Paris-Bastille (Raimondo); Vienna (Philip II in *Don Carlos*, Zachariah in *Nabucco*, Cardinal Brogni in Halévy's *La Juive*, de Silva in *Ernani*, and Giorgio); Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich (title role in *Saul* and Zoroastro in *Orlando*), San Francisco (Giorgio, Raimondo and Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*); Amsterdam (Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro*); *La Gioconda* in Barcelona; Teatro Real, Madrid (Philip II and Raimondo); Palermo (Walter in *Luisa Miller*); Seville (Mephistopheles in *Faust*); English National

Opera (the title role in Boito's *Mephistopheles*, Zachariah, de Silva, and Ford in *Sir John in Love*); and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden (Rodolfo in *La Sonnambula*, Elmiro in *Otello*, Frère Laurent in *Roméo et Juliette*, Banquo in *Macbeth*, and concert performances of Donizetti's *Dom Sebastien* (also recorded by Opera Rara)); and Mephistopheles in *La Damnation de Faust* in concerts with the London Symphony Orchestra and Sir Colin Davis in London and New York.

His highly successful concert career has taken him worldwide to perform with conductors including Giulini, Mehta, Muti, Chung, Masur, Gergiev, Gardiner and Sir Colin Davis and the world's most prestigious orchestras. His discography currently stands at over fifty recordings including, for Opera Rara, Mayr's *Medea in Corinto*, Mercadante's *Orazi e Curiazi*, Donizetti's *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, Meyerbeer's *Margherita d'Anjou* and Thomas' *La Cour de Célimène*. Other recordings include *Elijah*, Verdi's Requiem and Handel's *Saul* and *Agrippina*, and for Chandos' Opera in English series he has recorded Mephistopheles (*Faust*), Ramfis (*Aida*), Colline (*La Bohème*) and a disc of Great Operatic Arias.

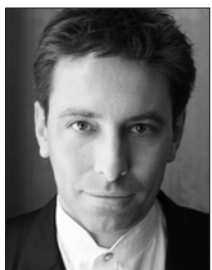
Geoffrey Mitchell's singing career has encompassed a remarkably wide repertoire from early to contemporary music and has taken him to Scandinavia, Germany, the former Czechoslovakia, Canada and Australasia. Early conducting experience with the BBC led to a wider involvement with his own singers and in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

The 2007/08 season saw the **London Philharmonic Orchestra** celebrate its seventy-fifth birthday. It also inaugurated Vladimir Jurowski as its new Principal Conductor and moved back into its splendidly restored Royal Festival Hall home.

With its performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, its trail-blazing international tours and pioneering education work, the **London**

Philharmonic Orchestra has long since earned a high reputation for versatility and artistic excellence. Distinguished musicians who have held positions with the Orchestra since its foundation in 1932 by Sir Thomas Beecham have included Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt, Franz Welser-Möst and Kurt Masur. Resident symphony orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall since 1992, presenting its main series of concerts there between September and May each year, the London Philharmonic Orchestra has also been the resident symphony orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera for more than forty years; it performs besides at venues around the UK, has made numerous tours across Europe, to America and Japan, and visited India, Hong Kong, China, Australia and South Africa.

Brad Cohen graduated from St John's College, Oxford, and studied with Celibidache and Bernstein in Germany, making his professional debut at the 1992 Almeida Festival. In 1994 he was awarded first prize in the Leeds Conductors' Competition, and has since conducted the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra,



Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, Het Gelders Orkest, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic

Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia, and the Orchestra of St John's Smith Square.

He has conducted *From the House of the Dead* and *Carmen* for English National Opera; *Carmen*, *The Merry Widow*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *L'elisir d'amore* and *La Cenerentola* for Opera Australia; *The Magic Flute*, *The Pearl Fishers* and *The Reluctant King* for Opera North; and *Rigoletto* and *Figaro* for English Touring Opera. For Almeida Opera he conducted the world premiere of Thomas Adès' *Powder her Face* (also at the Cheltenham Festival and in Bath and Oxford) and Guo Wenjing's *Wolfcub Village* and *Night Banquet* (also at the Hong Kong Festival).

Other operatic work includes *Les vêpres siciliennes*, *Poliuto*, *Anna Bolena*, *Andrea Chénier* and *Macbeth* for Chelsea Opera Group, *Macbeth*

for Opera New Zealand, *Die Fledermaus* for Opera Queensland, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Pearl Fishers*, *Norma* and *Nabucco* for Opera Holland Park, *La traviata* for Luzern, *Armida*, *Tancredi*, *Le Comte Ory*, *Cavalleria rusticana* & *Pagliacci* in the Royal Albert Hall, *Luisa Miller* and *Manon* for the Nederlands Nationale Reisopera, and *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Angers/Nantes Opera.

Brad Cohen has a strong involvement in the performance of new music. His diverse activities in this field include filming modern opera for TV, touring the ensemble pieces of

Frank Zappa, and commissioning music for the opening of the Millennium Dome. In 2002 he was Musical Director of Jonathan Dove's television opera *When She Died: Death of a Princess*. In 2006 the same team created the TV opera *Man on the Moon* for Channel Four. He also led the Australian premiere of Jonathan Dove's opera *Flight* at the 2006 Adelaide Festival.

Brad Cohen has become an accomplished operatic editor, and he has completed and published editions of *Maometto secondo*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and *Norma*.

On session: Simon Keenlyside



On session: Barry Banks



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 many millions 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 scholarships, 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 I 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 at the same time was an assistant producer with the Vienna State Opera, working 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.

The Pearl Fishers

Während Großbritannien im 19. Jahrhundert als Kolonialmacht die größeren Erfolge verbuchen konnte, war es vor allem in Frankreich, dass man – mehr als andernorts – die Exotismen fremder Länder in den Künsten reflektierte, und ganz besonders tat man sich darin hervor, orientalische Fiktionen auf die Opernbühne zu bringen. Zugegeben, die Briten waren sehr gut, wenn es darum ging, das Exotische zu malen (allerdings zu einer etwas späteren Zeit); in der Literatur und Musik jedoch schlugen die Franzosen sie um Längen.

Ganz offensichtlich war die Oper das ideale Medium zur Darstellung imaginärer exotischer Welten. Sie verband Literatur, die bildenden Künste und Musik und konnte hier und da sogar ein wenig die Realität – in Form tatsächlich beobachteter Ereignisse – einflechten. Ganz besonders aber konnte sie über andere eindimensionale Künste triumphieren, indem sie *tableaux vivants* darbot, in denen die Ereignisse schauspielerisch dargestellt, durch Musik vertieft und vor allem getanzt wurden, denn man sollte nicht die zunehmend zentrale

Rolle des Kostümballetts in den französischen Bühnenwerken des 19. Jahrhunderts unterschätzen.

Ein Wort sei noch zu dem Begriff des “Exotismus” gesagt, zu dem als wesentlicher aber keineswegs beherrschender Bestandteil auch der Orientalismus gehört. Wenn wir das gängige Repertoire von Literatur, Malerei, Oper und Ballett betrachten, so finden sich Exotismen aus dem Norden und Westen wie auch solche, die nach Osten blicken. Für die Franzosen war alles “Andersartige” willkommenes Material zur Präsentation von nationalen Stereotypen.

Was den Orient betrifft, so lassen sich verschiedene Ebenen der musikalischen Anspielung unterscheiden. Einerseits gab es Komponisten, die Libretti zu exotischen Themen vertonten, ohne zu versuchen, einen Stil zu finden, der nicht-westliche musikalische Techniken berücksichtigte. Ein Beispiel hierfür war die überaus erfolgreiche doch völlig dem italienischen Kompositionsstil verpflichtete Opera buffa *Le Caïd* von Ambroise Thomas, eine komische Oper, die von einem arabischen Kaid oder Stammesfürsten handelt.

Am anderen Ende der Skala fanden sich Komponisten wie Félicien David (1810–1876), der auf einer ausgedehnten Reise durch den Mittleren Osten orientalische Melodien aufzeichnete und diese später veröffentlichte. David erlangte internationalen Ruhm für seine 1844 entstandene Ode symphonique *Le Désert*, in der er quasi-orientalische Melodien und Techniken verarbeitete. Berlioz’ *Les Troyens à Carthage* enthält kaum orientalisch klingende Musik, mit Ausnahme eines unvermutet einsetzenden überaus wirkungsvollen Chors der nubischen Sklaven.

Irgendwo dazwischen lag die Norm eines orientalischen Allzweckstils, bei dem man die zur Repräsentation Afrikas, Indiens und sogar Japans und Chinas verwendete Musik kaum unterscheiden konnte. Allgegenwärtig unter all den musikalischen Techniken zur Darstellung des Ostens waren Bordune und rhythmische Ostinati sowie auch der ausgiebige Gebrauch des Schlagzeugs als passende Ergänzung zum glänzenden Metall der Kostüme. Besonders beliebt waren Fingerzimbeln und Tamburine wie auch der Einsatz von Oboe und Klarinette, zu denen sich gelegentlich noch eine Piccoloflöte gesellte, um eine orientalische Bläsergruppe zu imitieren; ferner gab es Tonleitern mit eigenwilligen Intervallen sowie

den großzügigen Einsatz von Acciaccatura und Fioritura (Schleifern und Verzierungen).

Im Kontext des expandierenden Repertoires von Opern mit orientalischen Sujets (die am Ende des Jahrhunderts in Werken wie Massenets *Thaïs* kulminierten) fand Bizet als einer der ersten passende musikalische Idiome zur Darstellung exotischer literarischer Themen. In dieser Hinsicht erweisen sich *Les Pêcheurs de perles* (*Die Perlenfischer*) als ein Pionierwerk, in dem der junge Bizet zugleich auch erstmalig zu einer eigenen Musiksprache fand, die ihm die Möglichkeit an die Hand gab, viele der formelhaften Wendungen der Opéra-Comique (gemeint ist hier die Institution) mit pseudo-orientalischen musikalischen Details zu würzen, die später zu der noch dichter mit orientalischen Motiven arbeitenden zweiaktigen Oper *Djamileh* sowie natürlich zu seinem anderen exotischen (wenn auch eher maurischen als orientalischen) Meisterwerk *Carmen* führen sollten.

Die Kritiker zeigten sich von dem Libretto zu *Les Pêcheurs*, das für das konventionelle Format der Opéra-Comique mit alternierenden gesprochenen Passagen und gesungenen Nummern gedacht war, wenig begeistert. Doch da die Oper am Théâtre-Lyrique uraufgeführt wurde, dessen Statuten

nicht diese Kombination von Text und Gesang verlangten, wurden die Dialoge kurz vor der Premiere in Rezitative umgewandelt. Vergleiche mit der Thematik der im 19. Jahrhundert viele Male inszenierten, nach 1850 jedoch in Vergessenheit geratenen Oper *La Vestale* von Spontini waren unausweichlich. Mehrere Nummern dieses Werks nehmen bereits ähnlich gestaltete Sätze von *Les Pêcheurs* vorweg, allerdings nur bezüglich des Librettos, nicht aber hinsichtlich der Musik.

Eine solche Szene ist das Gebet am Ende des ersten Akts (Band [7]), wo Léïla die Götter anruft, unterbrochen von den Einwüfen eines hinter der Bühne platzierten Chors. Die Verwendung der “coulisses”, des verborgenen Bühnenhintergrunds, war eine Tradition der Opéra-Comique, die bis in die Zeit vor dem 18. Jahrhundert zurückreichte; und weder Librettist noch Komponist ließen je freiwillig eine Gelegenheit aus, sie zu nutzen. Im vorliegenden Fall wiederholt der Chor “dans la coulisse” Léïlas Worte. Ihr plötzliches Auftauchen im Gebet wird von Bizet wirkungsvoll inszeniert, indem er die Streicher auf einen Klangteppich in tiefer Lage beschränkt, über dem sich ihre Stimme erhebt – zunächst mit den zur

Erzielung orientalischer Effekte typischen Verzierungen, doch dann, als der Chor mit einer konventionell geformten (und wunderbar eingängigen) Melodie einsetzt, mit den im Théâtre-Lyrique üblicherweise zu hörenden Koloraturen.

Als nächstes ist Nadir zu hören – auch er ungesehen –, der sich über den Klang ihrer Stimme wundert. Als er Léïla anspricht, erschrickt auch sie darüber, seine Stimme zu vernehmen. Nun wird mit dem Gebet der Priesterin subtil ein Liebesduett verwoben, wobei der Chor zu dem allgegenwärtigen und zugleich unmöglichen “Ah!” anhebt, das, wie es in der Partitur verlangt wird, *à bouche fermée* (mit geschlossenem Mund) ausgeführt werden soll.

Das Prélude zu der Oper (Band [8]) enthält zunächst noch keine orientalischen Elemente zur Einstimmung auf den Schauplatz der Handlung; diese reserviert Bizet für einen späteren Zeitpunkt, zu dem ein Ostinato von den allgegenwärtigen Tamburinen und einem Chor begleitet wird – tatsächlich handelt es sich um ein getanztes *Tableau vivant* (Band [9]). Konzipiert als ein Stück mit Bühnenbild, Tanz und Gesang, werden auch hier wieder Konventionen der französischen Oper mit Elementen orientalischer Allzweck-Tanzmusik verknüpft, wobei das Ganze

nichts mit Ceylon als realem Schauplatz der Handlung zu tun hat. Ein später für Bizets exotische Musik typisches musikalisches Merkmal war das unvermittelte Auftauchen von eigenwilligen lang ausgehaltenen Akkorden wie zum Beispiel die auf dem Wort “chants” (singt). Eine weitere Technik, die bereits in Léïlas Gebet zu beobachten ist, ist die Rückkehr zu reinen Konventionen der Opéra-Comique im Mittelteil. Wenn dann die Reprise der ersten, stärker orientalisch gefärbten Musik erklingt, ergibt sich die Gelegenheit zu einer ausgedehnten Orchesterpassage, während der die Tänzer ihr Können zur Schau stellen. Insgesamt ist dies eine brillante Eröffnungsformel für dieses orientalische Spektakel mit seiner Kombination von Tanz, Gesang und einem opulenten Bühnenbild.

Als nächstes folgt die Wahl von Zurga zum Anführer während der Perlenfischer-Saison (Band [3]), die in einem konventionellen Rezitativ geschildert wird, gefolgt von einer Melodie in unisono. Fremd klingende und zugleich kraftvolle Akkorde begleiten die Nummer, in der Zurga Nadir in der Gruppe der Taucher willkommen heißt und ein Tanz zu Ehren der Sonne aufgeführt wird, um böse Geister abzuwenden (Band [4]).

Unmittelbar vor dem gefeierten Duett “Au fond du temple saint” (“Aus der Tiefe des heiligen Tempels”) wird die lebenslange Freundschaft zwischen Nadir und Zurga thematisiert (Band [5]). Die beiden Freunde erinnern sich an ihre Entdeckung von Léïla in dem heiligen Tempel, wobei Bizet hier äußerst geschickt von dem brüderlichen Gespräch zu den romantisch gefärbten Reminiszenzen überleitet. In dem berühmten Duett treten die Harfen immer deutlicher in den Vordergrund, begleitet von einer langsamen Melodie im Orchester; dieses Thema – das man vielleicht als Léïlas Thema bezeichnen könnte – wird noch mehrere Male wiederkehren. Das Libretto enthält an dieser Stelle ein typisches Cliché, das eine orientalische Welt vorgaukeln soll – Zurga erinnert sich an den Augenblick, als Léïla für einen Moment ihren Schleier hob: “Oh gesegneter Anblick! Oh Verückung!” Das hier verwendete langsame hymnenartige Motiv wird durch die rhythmischen Bläser besonders betont. Die Musik wird hier zu einer Bestätigung der Freundschaft und mündet in den Schwur, Eifersucht und Leidenschaft zu verbannen. Angehängt ist das posthume Ende der Szene, das das hymnenartige Motiv wiederholt, welches das Duett begleitete (Band [16]).

Die folgende Szene gehört Nadir (Band [6]). Dieser macht sich zunächst Vorwürfe, weil er sein Versprechen gebrochen hat; die Szene ist untermalt von durchbrochenen Tremolando-Klängen in den Streichern. Die Musik geht sodann in eine Romanze über, in der Nadir in einem sanft trällernden Lied Erinnerungen an Léïla heraufbeschwört. Er glaubt in dieser an eine Berceuse erinnernden Arie, die wiederum im typischen Stil der Opéra-Comique gehalten und sehr ausdrucksstark, zugleich aber sehr sparsam orchestriert ist, ihre Stimme gehört zu haben. Hier zeigt sich ganz besonders Bizets subtiler Sinn für Harmonik – mithilfe einer leicht modal gefärbten Molltonart vermittelt er eine überzeugende Atmosphäre sehnsuchtsvoller Reminiszenz und das Gefühl der Zeitlosigkeit einer Nacht des Wartens. Nun kommt die bereits erwähnte Szene, in der Léïla ihre Gebete spricht, gefolgt von ihrer Cavatina, der ein Rezitativ vorangeht, in dem sie auf Nadir wartet. Diese Nummer ist eine der eingängigsten Stellen der gesamten Oper, auch wenn sich hier nicht eine Spur von orientalischen Stilelementen findet (Band [6]). Die Passage demonstriert Bizets meisterliche Beherrschung der Arie im typischen Stil der Opéra-Comique, wobei sie nicht unwesentlich von Gounod beeinflusst ist. Nadir antwortet im Stile einer Chanson

(Band [9]), die schon wesentlich deutlicher eine exotische Atmosphäre vermittelt. Er nähert sich singend aus der Distanz, begleitet von hinter der Bühne spielenden Harfen. Bizet entwickelte mehr und mehr Geschick darin, die *coulisses* nicht nur dramatisch, sondern auch musikalisch zu nutzen; man denke nur an die Passage in *Carmen*, wo Carmen für Don José den Romalis tanzt und hinter der Bühne die Trompetensignale seines Regiments erklingen.

Die überraschte Léïla hört, wie er sich nähert, und kommt ihm entgegen. Indem sie aufeinander treffen, wird das beschwörende Lied zu einem Allegro-molto-Duett “pochender Herzen” (Band [10]) – in nicht nur für das französische Opernrepertoire typischer Weise imitiert das Orchester hier, in einer der längsten durchkomponierten Szenen der Oper, den Rhythmus des Herzschlags, wobei das Duett zum Ende hin eine eher lyrische Stimmung annimmt.

Bei dem ersten Tableau des dritten Aktes handelt es sich um ein Solo für Zurga (Band [11]); es folgt auf eine instrumentale Einleitung, in der das Orchester einen Sturm schildert – voller Passagen durcheinander wirbelnder Harmonien, die von donnernden Pauken untermalt werden. Aus dem

nachfolgenden Monolog wird deutlich, dass der Sturm als Metapher für Zurgas innere Erregung dienen sollte, weshalb auch sein Rezitativ mehrfach von wiederkehrenden Passagen der stürmischen Musik unterbrochen wird. Schließlich ringt er sich zu einer Haltung durch, die ihn sich fragen lässt, ob sein lebenslanger Freund Nadir ihm seine Eifersucht verzeihen kann. Nun taucht Léïla auf (Band [12]) und versetzt Zurga erneut in Unruhe. Während im Hintergrund das hymnenhafte Motiv erklingt, singt Léïla ihre Arie, die sich zu einem Duett entwickelt, in dem sie Zurga anfleht, Nadirs Leben zu schonen. Dieser will zunächst Gnade walten lassen, doch als Léïla der Schleier abgerissen wird, wird er erneut so erregt, dass er sich noch einmal anders entscheidet. Er verurteilt die beiden zum Tode und setzt damit seine absolute Macht durch.

Mit diesem durchkomponierten Satz fand Bizet seine eigene Methode, die dramatische Handlung ihrem Ende entgegenzutreiben. Diese Technik sollte er auch in *Carmen* überaus effektiv anwenden, wobei er die traditionelle *opéra à numéros* der Opéra-Comique zugleich umstürzte und erweiterte. Mit wachsender Leidenschaft verflucht Léïla den erbarmungslosen Zurga und nennt ihn ein

Ungeheuer. Das letzte Wort hat schließlich der Chor.

Angehängt findet sich das 1893 entstandene Trio (Band [17]), in dem Nadir und Zurga von ihrer Liebe zu Léïla singen, die sie beide erhört. Dieser Satz ist Benjamin Godard zugeschrieben.

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Übersetzung: Stephanie Wollny

Inhaltsangabe (die eingespielten Ausschnitte sind fett gedruckt)

Erster Akt

Die Handlung spielt auf der Insel Ceylon im Indischen Ozean, wo die Einwohner von der Perlenfischerei leben. Nach einer kurzen musikalischen **Einleitung** erblicken wir die Fischer und ihre Familien bei der Arbeit, singend und tanzend. **Zurga, der Anführer der Fischer, erinnert sie daran, dass sie ein Oberhaupt wählen müssen, und sie bezeugen ihm einstimmig ihre Loyalität.**

Ein junger Fischer namens Nadir taucht auf und Zurga erkennt in ihm seinen alten Gefährten. Sie hatten sich beide auf ihren Reisen in einem Tempel in Kandy in die Priesterin verliebt. Wegen ihrer Rivalität

hatten sie sich getrennt und geschworen, sie nie wiederzusehen, doch nun erneuern sie ihre Freundschaft und schwören, dass die Erinnerung an die Priesterin sie nicht noch einmal entzweien soll.

Nourabad, der Hohepriester von Brahma, erscheint mit einer Priesterin, die ausgewählt wurde, für die bevorstehende Expedition der Perlenfischer die Gebete zu sprechen und die bösen Geister abzuwenden. Zurga zwingt sie unter Androhung der Todesstrafe, einen Eid der Keuschheit abzulegen. Wenn sie die Perlentaucher vor Unglück bewahrt, wird sie als Belohnung deren schönste Perle erhalten. **Obwohl die Priesterin verschleiert ist, erkennt Nadir an ihrer Stimme, dass sie die Frau ist, die er liebt; und als sie allein sind, gesteht er, dass er ihr an diesen Ort gefolgt sei. Er lauscht, als Leïla ihre Gesänge beginnt, doch dann kann er sich nicht länger beherrschen und ruft nach ihr; sie bricht ihre Gebete ab und erwidert seine Liebe.**

Zweiter Akt

Die Fischer sind wohlbehalten zurückgekehrt und Leïla ist für den Abend von ihrer Wache befreit. Um zu beweisen, dass sie ihr Versprechen halten kann, erzählt sie dem Priester Nourabad, wie sie als kleines Mädchen

einen Flüchtigen beschützte und zu keiner Zeit an seine Häsher verriet. Als Zeichen seiner Dankbarkeit habe der von ihr gerettete Mann ihr eine Halskette geschenkt, die sie bis zu diesem Tag trage.

Nourabad verlässt Leïla und sie singt eine Cavatina, die ihre Liebe zum Ausdruck bringt. Nadir schleicht sich in die heiligen Gemächer und sie sind in ihrer Liebe wieder vereint.

Doch die beiden werden beobachtet und während sich über ihnen ein heftiger Sturm entlädt, nimmt Nourabad sie gefangen und bezichtigt sie des Sakrilegs. Zurga versucht, seinen Freund vor der Wut der abergläubischen Menge zu schützen, die seinen sofortigen Tod verlangt. Nourabad hetzt sie noch weiter auf und sie entreißen Leïla ihren Schleier. Als Zurga in ihr daraufhin die Priesterin aus dem Tempel in Kandy erkennt, begreift er, dass Nadir ihren Schwur, sie zu vergessen, gebrochen hat; und nun verlangt auch er, dass das schuldige Paar mit dem Tod bestraft werde.

Dritter Akt

Zurgas Wut hat sich gelegt und er denkt traurig über Nadirs Schicksal nach. Leïla setzt sich für ihn ein und besteht darauf, sie allein sei schuldig. Erst jetzt erkennt sie, dass Zurga sie liebt. Er zeigt Mitleid, seine Eifersucht

erwacht jedoch erneut, als Leïla zeigt, wie sehr sie seinen Rivalen liebt. Er lässt sie von Nourabad zum Scheiterhaufen führen, auf dem sie geopfert werden soll. Doch bevor sie geht, gibt sie Zurga ihre Halskette und bittet ihn, diese ihrer Mutter zu schicken. Mit einem Aufschrei des Erkennens läuft er den beiden nach, um sie zu retten.

Die Perlenfischer bereiten die rituelle Hinrichtung von Leïla und Nadir vor, die bei Sonnenaufgang vollzogen werden soll. Im letzten Augenblick erscheint Zurga mit der Nachricht, das Lager stehe in Flammen und die Frauen und Kinder befänden sich in Gefahr. Die Fischer laufen fort, um ihnen zu helfen. Zurga enthüllt dem gefangenen Paar, dass er es war, den Leïla von vielen Jahren rettete, und will sich nun aus Dankbarkeit für den von ihr bewiesenen Mut revanchieren. Er selbst hat im Lager Feuer gelegt, um ihnen eine Gelegenheit zur Flucht zu verschaffen. Dankbar entkommen die beiden. Zurga bleibt allein zurück und stellt sich den Konsequenzen seiner Tat.

Übersetzung: Stephanie Wollny

Rebecca Evans (Leïla) wurde in Südwest Wales geboren und an der Guildhall School of Music

and Drama ausgebildet. Mit finanzieller Unterstützung der Peter Moores Foundation studierte sie zudem bei Ronald Schneider in Wien. Am Royal Opera House Covent Garden hat sie die Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*) und Johanna (*Sweeney Todd*) gesungen. Sie ist regelmäßig an der Bayerischen Staatsoper in München zu Gast, wo ihre bisherigen Rollen die Ginevra (*Ariodante*), Despina, Zdenka (*Arabella*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*) und Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*) umfassten. Ferner hat sie die Despina an der Deutschen Staatsoper Berlin, die Ilia an der Niederländischen Oper sowie an der English National Opera die Romilda (*Xerxes*) und die Gouvernante (*The Turn of the Screw*) gegeben.

Auch in den USA hat Rebecca Evans große Erfolge gefeiert, so in den Rollen der Susanna und Zerlina an der Metropolitan Opera in New York, als Susanna an der Santa Fe Opera, als Pamina und Adèle (*Die Fledermaus*) an der Lyric Opera of Chicago sowie als Zerlina, Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) und Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) an der San Francisco Opera.

Konzertaufführungen umfassen Auftritte bei den BBC Proms und auf den Festivals von Salzburg, Edinburgh, Tanglewood und Ravinia. Zu den Orchestern, mit denen sie

zusammengearbeitet hat, zählen San Francisco Symphony, Boston Symphony, das Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment unter Sir Charles Mackerras, Monteverdi Choir & Orchestra unter Sir John Eliot Gardiner sowie das Sapporo Symphony Orchestra unter Tadaaki Otaka.

Ausgezeichnet mit dem Grammy Award, hat Rebecca Evans neben zahlreichen anderen Einspielungen in der Chandos-Reihe "Opera in English" die Rollen der Gretel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Marzellina (*Fidelio*) und Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*) gesungen. Weitere CD-Produktionen für Chandos umfassen Beethovens Messe in C-Dur und Delius' *Mass of Life*.

Barry Banks (Nadir) absolvierte sein Studium als Stipendiat der Peter Moores Foundation am Royal College of Music und hat sich inzwischen als einer der herausragenden zeitgenössischen Interpreten des italienischen Belcanto-Repertoires einen Namen gemacht. Er ist ein häufig gefragter Gast auf den Bühnen der internationalen Opernwelt und hat unter anderem am Royal Opera House Covent Garden, an der Metropolitan Opera, an der Opéra National de Paris, an der English National Opera, am Théâtre du

Châtelet, auf dem Salzburg Festival, an La Monnaie, an der Santa Fé Opera und am Teatro Comunale di Bologna gesungen. Zu seinen Rollen zählen Lindoro (*L'italiana in Algeri*), Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*), Oreste (*Ermione*), Tom Rakewell, Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Narciso (*Il turco in Italia*), Belfiore und Libenshof (*Il viaggio a Reims*), L'Astrologue (*Le Coq d'or*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) und Uberto (*La donna del lago*).

Auf dem Konzertpodium hat Barry Banks Rossinis *Petite Messe solennelle* mit dem Royal Philharmonic Orchestra unter Daniele Gatti, Jaquino (*Fidelio*) mit dem City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra unter Walter Weller, Bruckners Requiem mit dem Scottish Chamber Orchestra unter Sir Charles Mackerras und Rossinis *Armida* auf dem Edinburgh Festival unter Carlo Rizzi gesungen. Weitere Highlights seiner Karriere sind Benjamin Britzens *War Requiem* mit dem Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg unter Jan Latham-Koenig, eine konzertante Darbietung von Rossinis *Ermione* in der Carnegie Hall sowie Donizettis *I puritani* und *Linda di Chamounix* auf dem Caramoor Festival.

Zu Barry Banks' Diskographie in der Chandos-Reihe "Opera in English" zählen

Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Giannetto (*The Thieving Magpie*) und Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) sowie eine CD mit großen Opernarien. Weitere Einspielungen umfassen *La Bohème*, *Un ballo in maschera* und *Trial by Jury*.

Simon Keenlyside (Zurga) wurde in London geboren und studierte Zoologie in Cambridge sowie Gesang am Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, wo er Stipendiat der Peter Moores Foundation war.

Sein Operndebut feierte er an der Hamburger Staatsoper in der Rolle des Grafen Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Seither hatte er Engagements in Genf (Hamlet und Pelléas), Zürich (Don Giovanni), Barcelona (Hamlet), Madrid (Posa), San Francisco (Pelléas), Sydney und Berlin (Figaro), Brüssel (Orfeo), Paris (Papageno, Pelléas, Guglielmo, Yeletsky und Dandini), Wien (Figaro, Marcello, Graf Almaviva, Billy Budd, Don Giovanni, Papageno und Posa), München (Marcello, Graf Almaviva und Wolfram), an der Metropolitan Opera (Belcore, Marcello, Papageno und Graf Almaviva), auf dem Salzburg Festival (Guglielmo und Papageno), an der Mailänder Scala (Papageno und Graf

Almaviva) sowie am Royal Opera House Covent Garden (wo seine Rollen Billy Budd, Graf Almaviva, Don Giovanni, Valentin, Pelléas, Guglielmo, Papageno und Prospero in der Weltaufführung von Adès' *The Tempest* umfassten). Für Billy Budd an der English National Opera und Winston in der Weltaufführung von 1984 am Royal Opera House wurde er im Jahr 2006 mit dem Olivier Award für herausragende Leistungen im Bereich der Oper ausgezeichnet.

Simon Keenlyside tritt zudem häufig auf dem Konzertpodium auf; Recitals haben ihn nach New York, San Francisco, Lissabon, Genf, Moskau, Paris, Amsterdam, Rom, Brüssel und London, auf die Festivals von Edinburgh, Aldeburgh, Salzburg und München sowie an die Mailänder Scala und nach Wien geführt.

Seine CD-Einspielungen umfassen Recital-Einspielungen von Schubert und Strauss, eine CD mit Liedern von Schumann, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, die Titelrolle von *Don Giovanni*, *Carmina Burana*, Marcello in *La Bohème* und Graf Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Seine CD mit Orchesterarien wurde im Jahr 2007 mit dem *Gramophone* Best Recital Award ausgezeichnet. Zu seinen Aufnahmen für Chandos zählen die Titelrolle in *Billy Budd*

sowie Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*) in der Chandos-Reihe “Opera in English”.

Alastair Miles (Nourabad) hat sich international als einer der führenden Bassisten einen Namen gemacht. Engagements haben ihn an die Metropolitan Opera (Giorgio in *I Puritani* und Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*), die Opéra National de Paris-Bastille (Raimondo), die Wiener Oper (Philipp II. in *Don Carlos*, Zachariah in *Nabucco*, Cardinal Brogni in Halévy's *La Juive*, de Silva in *Ernani* sowie Giorgio), die Bayerische Staatsoper in München (Titelrolle von *Saul* und Zoroastro in *Orlando*), nach San Francisco (Giorgio, Raimondo und Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Amsterdam (Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro*), Barcelona (*La Gioconda*), an das Teatro Real in Madrid (Philipp II. und Raimondo), nach Palermo (Walter in *Luisa Miller*) und nach Sevilla (Mephistopheles in *Faust*) geführt, ferner an die English National Opera (Titelrolle von Boitos *Mephistopheles*, Zachariah, de Silva sowie Ford in *Sir John in Love*) und an die Royal Opera Covent Garden (Rodolfo in *La Sonnambula*, Elmiro in *Otello*, Frère Laurent in *Roméo et Juliette*, Banquo in *Macbeth* sowie konzertante Aufführungen von

Donizettis *Dom Sebastien* (das letztgenannte Werk wurde auch für “Opera Rara” eingespielt)). Zudem hat er in konzertanten Aufführungen von *La Damnation de Faust* mit dem London Symphony Orchestra unter Sir Colin Davis in London und New York den Mephistopheles gesungen.

Seine überaus erfolgreiche internationale Konzertlaufbahn hat ihn mit Dirigenten wie Giulini, Mehta, Muti, Chung, Masur, Gergiev, Gardiner und Sir Colin Davis sowie den weltweit renommiertesten Orchestern zusammengeführt. Seine Diskographie umfasst gegenwärtig mehr als fünfzig Einspielungen, darunter für “Opera Rara” Mayrs *Medea in Corinto*, Mercadantes *Orazi e Curiazi*, Donizettis *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, Meyerbeers *Margherita d'Anjou* und Thomas' *La Cour de Célimène*. Zu seinen weiteren Einspielungen zählen *Elijah*, Verdis Requiem sowie Händels *Saul und Agrippina*; für die Chandos-Reihe “Opera in English” hat er Mephistopheles (*Faust*), Ramfis (*Aida*), Colline (*La Bobème*) und eine CD mit großen Opernarien aufgenommen.

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.

In der Spielzeit 2007/2008 feierte das **London Philharmonic Orchestra** seinen 75sten Geburtstag. Zudem wurde Vladimir Jurowski als neuer Chefdirigent eingeführt und das Orchester kehrte in sein Stammhaus, die prachtvoll restaurierte Royal Festival Hall, zurück.

Mit seinen Aufführungen im Konzertsaal und im Opernhaus, seinen zahlreichen preisgekrönten Einspielungen, den bahnbrechenden internationalen Tourneen und seiner Pionierarbeit im Erziehungsbereich

hat sich das London Philharmonic Orchestra längst einen hervorragenden Ruf für Vielseitigkeit und hohen künstlerischen Rang erworben. Zu die Reihe renommierter Musiker, die seit der Gründung des Orchesters durch Sir Thomas Beecham im Jahre 1932 mit ihm verbunden waren gehören Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt, Franz Welser-Möst und Kurt Masur. Als fest ansässiges Sinfonieorchester der Royal Festival Hall seit 1992 stellt das London Philharmonic Orchestra dort jedes Jahr zwischen September und Mai seine Hauptkonzertreihe vor; außerdem ist es seit über vierzig Jahren Hausorchester der Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Daneben tritt es an Veranstaltungsorten in ganz Großbritannien auf, hat zahlreiche Konzertreisen durch Europa, Amerika und Japan unternommen und Indien, Hongkong, China, Australien und Südafrika besucht.

Brad Cohen absolvierte sein Studium am St. John's College in Oxford und studierte bei Celibidache und Bernstein in Deutschland; sein professionelles Debüt feierte er im Rahmen des Almeida Festivals von 1992. Im Jahr 1994 gewann er bei der Leeds Conductors' Competition den ersten Preis.

Seither hat er das London Philharmonic Orchestra, das Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, das BBC National Orchestra of Wales, das BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, die Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, das Stavanger Sinfonieorchester, Het Gelders Orkest, das Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, das National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, das Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, das Scottish Chamber Orchestra, die City of London Sinfonia und das Orchestra of St. John's Smith Square dirigiert.

Zudem hat er an der English National Opera *From the House of the Dead* und *Carmen*, an der Opera Australia *Carmen*, *The Merry Widow*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *L'elisir d'amore* und *La Cenerentola*, an der Opera North *Die Zauberflöte*, *The Pearl Fishers* und *The Reluctant King* sowie für die English Touring Opera *Rigoletto* und *Figaro* dirigiert. An der Almeida Opera leitete er die Welturaufführung vom Thomas Adès' *Powder her Face* (ebenso auf dem Cheltenham Festival sowie in Bath und Oxford) und Guo Wenjings *Wolfcub Village* und *Night Banquet* (wie auch auf dem Hongkong Festival).

Weitere Opernengagements umfassen *Les vêpres siciliennes*, *Poliuto*, *Anna Bolena*, *Andrea Chénier* und *Macbeth* für die

Chelsea Opera Group, *Macbeth* für Opera New Zealand, *Die Fledermaus* für Opera Queensland, *Nabucco*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut*, *The Pearl Fishers* und *Norma* für Opera Holland Park, *La traviata* in Luzern, *Armida*, *Tancredi*, *Le Comte Ory*, *Cavalleria rusticana* und *Pagliacci* in der Royal Albert Hall, *Luisa Miller* und *Manon* für die Nederlands Nationale Reisopera sowie *Lucia di Lammermoor* an der Oper von Angers/Nantes.

Brad Cohen engagiert sich vor allem auch für die Aufführung von neuer Musik. Zu seinen verschiedenen Aktivitäten auf diesem Gebiet gehören die Verfilmung moderner Opern für das Fernsehen, Konzerttourneen mit Ensemblewerken von Frank Zappa sowie ein Kompositionsauftrag für die Eröffnung des Millennium Dome. 2002 wirkte er als Musikdirektor an Jonathan Doves TV-Oper *When She Died: Death of a Princess*. Dasselbe Team realisierte 2006 für BBC Channel Four die TV-Oper *Man on the Moon*. Zudem leitete Brad Cohen auf dem Adelaide Festival von 2006 die australische Premiere von Jonathan Doves Oper *Flight*.

Auch als Herausgeber von Opern hat Brad Cohen sich einen Namen gemacht; bisher hat er *Maometto secondo*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* und *Norma* ediert.



The Pearl Fishers

En matière de colonisation, si la Grande-Bretagne peut prétendre avoir été le plus loin et avoir occupé le plus vaste terrain au cours du XIX^e siècle, c'est sûrement la France qui a canalisé plus que tout autre l'exotisme des terres étrangères dans les arts et s'est particulièrement distinguée dans la représentation de fictions orientales sur la scène lyrique. Les Britanniques, il faut le dire, ont assez bien *peint* l'exotisme, mais (un peu plus tard) les Français les ont battus à plates coutures dans les domaines de la littérature et de la musique.

L'opéra était certainement le moyen d'expression idéal pour présenter l'exotisme supposé. Il alliait la littérature, les arts visuels et la musique et pouvait même ajouter quelques bribes de réalité – des événements observés – ici et là. Et surtout, il pouvait triompher d'autres arts unidimensionnels en façonnant des tableaux vivants, où des événements pouvaient être joués, mis en valeur par la musique et surtout dansés, car il ne faut pas sous-estimer le rôle de plus en plus central du ballet costumé dans le spectacle français du XIX^e siècle.

Il convient de dire un mot de la notion d'"exotisme" dont l'orientalisme constituait une part importante, mais en aucun cas prédominante. Lorsque l'on regarde le répertoire de la littérature, de la peinture, de l'opéra et du ballet, on peut trouver des exotisme du Nord et de l'Ouest ainsi que ceux qui se tournaient vers l'Orient. Pour les Français, tout ce qui était "autre" était bon à être exploité, généralement en termes de stéréotypes nationaux.

En ce qui concerne l'Orient, on peut distinguer divers niveaux d'évocation musicale. D'une part, il y avait des compositeurs qui mettaient en musique des opéras sur des thèmes exotiques, sans chercher à adopter un style intégrant des techniques musicales non occidentales. On en trouve un exemple dans *Le Caïd*, opéra bouffe d'Ambroise Thomas, entièrement italianisé, un opéra comique qui raconte l'histoire d'un caïd ou chef arabe et qui remporta un immense succès.

À l'autre extrémité de l'échelle, il y avait des compositeurs comme Félicien David (1810–1876), qui avait noté des mélodies orientales lors d'une longue tournée au Moyen-Orient,

avant de les publier. David remporta un succès international avec son ode symphonique *Le Désert* (1844), qui comprenait des mélodies et des techniques quasi orientales. Dans *Les Troyens à Carthage* de Berlioz, il y a peu de musique qui sonne comme de la musique orientale, à l'exception d'un chœur inattendu et très efficace chanté par les esclaves nubiens.

Quelque part entre ces deux extrêmes, on trouvait la norme d'un style oriental polyvalent où les musiques censées représenter l'Afrique, l'Inde et même le Japon et la Chine étaient difficiles à identifier. Parmi les techniques musicales omniprésentes pour représenter l'Orient, les compositeurs utilisaient les bourdons et les ostinatos rythmiques, tout en faisant une large place aux percussions pour compléter la présence de métal brillant dans les costumes. Les cymbales à doigts et les tambours de basque étaient particulièrement prisés, de même que le hautbois et la clarinette, et parfois un piccolo pour compléter le tout, afin d'imiter les instruments à vent orientaux, les gammes étant modulées avec des intervalles étranges et une utilisation généreuse des acciaturas et des fioritures (appoggiatures brèves et ornements).

Au sein du répertoire d'opéras orientaux en plein essor (qui a culminé à la fin du siècle avec

des œuvres comme *Thaïs* de Massenet), Bizet émerge comme l'un des premiers compositeurs capables de trouver des langages musicaux exotiques dignes des thèmes littéraires exotiques. À cet égard, *Les Pêcheurs de perles* apparaissent comme une œuvre novatrice, la première où le jeune Bizet exprime une voix nettement personnelle, créant une façon de pimenter de nombreuses formules convenues de l'Opéra-Comique (l'institution) avec des détails musicaux pseudo orientaux, qui allait mener à l'opéra oriental en deux actes plus concentré *Djamileh* et, bien sûr, à son autre chef-d'œuvre exotique (même s'il est plus mauresque qu'oriental) *Carmen*.

La critique s'enthousiasma pour le livret des *Pêcheurs de perles* qui aurait dû s'adapter au format conventionnel de l'Opéra-Comique, avec alternance de dialogues parlés et de numéros chantés. Mais comme cet opéra fut créé au Théâtre-Lyrique, où cette contrainte n'était pas imposée, les dialogues furent transformés en récitatifs peu avant la première. Inévitablement, on le compara au sujet d'un opéra aujourd'hui oublié, *La Vestale* de Spontini, qui fit l'objet de nombreuses reprises au XIX^e siècle, mais dont la popularité diminua après 1850. Plusieurs de ses numéros annoncent des mouvements analogues dans

Les Pêcheurs de perles en ce qui concerne le livret, mais absolument pas sur le plan musical.

Il y a notamment la scène de la prière à la fin de l'acte I (page 7), où les propos que Léïla adresse aux dieux sont repris en écho par un chœur en coulisse. L'utilisation des "coulisses", invisibles, était une tradition qui remontait au-delà du XVIII^e siècle dans les usages de l'Opéra-Comique: aucune équipe librettiste-compositeur qui se respectait n'aurait manqué une occasion de les exploiter. Dans ce cas, le chœur "dans la coulisse" se fait l'écho des paroles de Léïla. Bizet traduit son apparition soudaine en prière en limitant les cordes à un coussin sonore dans le registre grave sur lequel elle évolue; il ajoute tout d'abord des fioritures ornementales qui ont un effet oriental, mais lorsque le chœur commence à chanter une mélodie équilibrée et conventionnelle (délicieusement entraînante), cet effet se transforme en un coloratura typique des usages en vigueur au Théâtre-Lyrique.

Nadir chante, tout aussi invisible, s'émerveillant du son de sa voix. Lorsqu'il appelle Léïla, elle aussi est choquée de l'entendre. Au milieu de la prière de la prêtresse, un duo d'amour se tisse avec

subtilité alors que le chœur fait entendre un "Ah!" omniprésent et impossible, qui, selon la partition, doit être chanté "à bouche fermée".

Le début du Prélude de l'opéra (page 1) ne comporte aucune inflexion orientale pour camper la scène: Bizet réserve cela à plus tard lorsqu'un ostinato accompagné d'omniprésents tambours de basque et du chant d'un chœur se transforme en un tableau vivant dansé (page 2). Écrit comme une pièce avec décor, danse et chant, ce tableau allie une fois encore les conventions lyriques françaises et une musique de danse orientale polyvalente – sans le moindre point commun avec Ceylan, où se déroule l'intrigue. Un élément deviendra l'une des caractéristiques de Bizet dans la musique exotique; c'est l'introduction soudaine d'étranges accords tenus, comme ceux qu'il place sur le mot "chants". Une autre technique, déjà observée dans la prière de Léïla, consiste à revenir à la convention originelle de l'Opéra-Comique dans la section centrale. Lorsque survient la reprise de la première musique, plus orientale, elle s'autorise un long passage orchestral pour donner aux danseurs le temps de montrer leur talent: dans l'ensemble, c'est une brillante formule pour ouvrir le spectacle oriental avec une combinaison de danse, de chant et un décor somptueux.

Vient ensuite l'élection de Zurga comme chef pour la durée de la saison de pêche à la perle (page 3), racontée dans un récitatif conventionnel et suivie d'une mélodie à l'unisson. Des accords étranges et puissants accompagnent le numéro où Zurga accueille Nadir dans l'équipe des plongeurs et exécute une danse au Soleil pour éliminer tout esprit mauvais (page 4).

L'approche du célèbre duo "Au fond du temple saint" dépeint l'amitié qui a toujours uni Nadir et Zurga (page 5). Les deux amis se souviennent de leur découverte de Léïla dans le temple saint. Avec quelle habileté Bizet module de la discussion fraternelle à cette réminiscence à l'eau de rose! Les harpes émergent dans le célèbre passage en duo, et une lente mélodie accompagne à l'orchestre: c'est un thème – peut-être le thème de Léïla – qui reviendra plusieurs fois. Le livret comporte un cliché typique des contes de fées orientaux: lorsque Zurga se souvient du moment où Léïla a levé son voile pendant un instant: "Ô vision! Ô rêve!", les cuivres soulignent le lent motif en forme d'hymne pour lui donner plus d'émphase. La musique devient une affirmation de l'amitié masculine et le vœu de chasser la jalousie et la passion. S'y ajoute la fin posthume qui réitère

le motif en forme d'hymne qui accompagnait le duo (page 6).

La scène suivante est celle de Nadir (page 6). Il commence par s'admonester pour avoir rompu son serment, sur un accompagnement harmonique perturbé, tremolando, aux cordes. La musique s'apaise ensuite en une Romance où il évoque avec respect des souvenirs de Léïla dans un chant doux et mélodieux. Il pense avoir entendu sa voix dans cet air qui ressemble à une berceuse, une fois encore dans le style typique de l'Opéra-Comique; l'orchestration est légère et magnifique. Ici la subtilité harmonique de Bizet ressort, dans une tonalité mineure doucement modale qui lui donne une atmosphère envahissante de souvenir teinté de nostalgie et le sens de l'éternité d'une nuit d'attente. Vient ensuite la scène déjà mentionnée où Léïla prie, suivie de sa Cavatine, précédée d'un récitatif, où elle attend Nadir. Ce numéro est l'un des moments les plus mémorables de l'opéra, même s'il ne comporte aucune trace de techniques orientales (page 8). Il montre la maîtrise qu'avait Bizet de l'aria typique du style de l'Opéra-Comique, largement redevable à celui de Gounod. Nadir répond sous la forme d'une Chanson beaucoup

plus exotique (page [9]). Il approche, en chantant de loin accompagné par les harpes en coulisses. Bizet est devenu de plus en plus expert en l'art d'utiliser les coulisses, non seulement sur le plan dramatique, mais également sur le plan musical: pensez au passage de *Carmen*, où Carmen danse la romalis pour Don José et où l'on entend le son des clairons de son régiment en coulisses.

Léïla, effrayée et attirée par lui, l'entend venir. Le chant magique se transforme en un duo Allegro molto, le "cœur battant" (page [10]), lorsqu'ils se rencontrent, c'est l'orchestre qui donne la pulsation cardiaque – ce qui est assez fréquent dans le répertoire lyrique français. C'est l'une des plus longues scènes en forme ouverte de l'opéra et elle se termine sur un duo plus lyrique.

Le premier tableau de l'acte III est un solo de Zurga (page [11]) qui suit la représentation d'un orage dans l'introduction orchestrale, aux harmonies tourbillonnantes, étayée par des timbales assourdissantes. Le soliloque qui suit montre à l'évidence que l'orage était une métaphore du propre désarroi de Zurga, et son récitatif est ponctué par des réapparitions de la musique de l'orage. Il prend finalement le dessus en se demandant si Nadir, son ami de toujours, pourra lui pardonner sa jalousie.

Léïla apparaît (page [12]) et jette Zurga dans le désarroi. On entend en arrière-plan le motif en forme d'hymne et l'air de Léïla se transforme en duo lorsqu'elle implore la clémence pour Nadir. Zurga commence par pardonner, mais son désarroi l'amène à changer d'avis lorsque le voile de Léïla lui est arraché. Il les condamne à mort, affirmant sa puissance royale.

Ce mouvement en forme ouverte allait devenir pour Bizet le moyen de faire avancer l'action dramatique jusqu'à sa conclusion: une technique qu'il allait réutiliser magistralement dans *Carmen*, où il bouleverse tout en l'allongeant le traditionnel opéra à numéros de l'Opéra-Comique. La passion montant, Léïla maudit l'impitoyable Zurga et le traite de monstre. Le chœur a le dernier mot.

Dans le Trio de 1893 qui figure en appendice (page [13]), Nadir comme Zurga chantent leur amour pour Léïla qui les accepte tous les deux. Il est attribué au compositeur Benjamin Godard.

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Argument (les extraits figurant sur cet enregistrement sont en caractères gras)

Acte I

L'action se déroule sur l'île de Ceylan dans l'Océan indien, où les habitants vivent de la pêche des perles. Après un court **prélude**, on voit les pêcheurs et leurs familles travailler, chanter et danser. **Zurga, qui est à la tête des pêcheurs, leur rappelle qu'ils doivent choisir un chef; ils lui jurent loyauté à l'unanimité.**

Nadir, un jeune pêcheur, arrive et Zurga reconnaît en lui son ancien compagnon. Au cours de leurs voyages, dans un temple de Candi, ils étaient tous deux tombés amoureux de la prêtresse. Ils s'étaient séparés en raison de leur rivalité et s'étaient jurés de ne plus jamais la revoir; mais ils réaffirment maintenant leur amitié et jurent que le souvenir de la prêtresse ne les séparera pas.

Nourabad, le grand prêtre de Brahma, amène une prêtresse qui a été choisie pour prier pour les pêcheurs durant leur prochaine expédition de pêche à la perle et pour chasser les esprits mauvais. Zurga lui impose un serment de chasteté sous peine de mort. Leur plus belle perle sera sa récompense pour avoir mis les pêcheurs à l'abri du mal. **Bien qu'elle soit voilée, Nadir reconnaît sa voix, celle de la prêtresse qu'il aime, et, une fois seul, il avoue qu'il l'a suivie jusqu'ici. Écoutant**

Léïla commencer son incantation, il ne peut plus résister et l'appelle. Elle s'interrompt et répond à son amour.

Acte II

Une fois les pêcheurs rentrés sains et saufs, Léïla est libérée de sa veille pour la soirée. Pour prouver son aptitude à tenir une promesse, elle raconte au prêtre Nourabad que, lorsqu'elle était petite fille, elle a protégé un fugitif sans jamais rien dire à ses poursuivants. En signe de gratitude, cet homme lui a offert un collier, qu'elle porte encore à ce jour.

Le prêtre quitte Léïla, qui chante une cavatine pleine d'amour. Nadir pénètre dans l'enceinte sacrée et ils se retrouvent avec extase. Mais on les observe et, au moment où une violente tempête éclate dans le ciel, ils sont capturés et accusés de sacrilège par Nourabad. Zurga tente de protéger son ami de la fureur des indigènes superstitieux, qui exigent sa mort immédiate. Nourabad attise leur frénésie et arrache le voile de Léïla. Lorsque Zurga reconnaît en elle la prêtresse du temple de Candi, il comprend que Nadir a trahi leur serment par lequel ils s'engageaient à l'oublier; il exige avec colère la mort du couple coupable.

Acte III

La colère de Zurga s'est apaisée et il pense avec tristesse au destin de Nadir. Léïla plaide en sa faveur, en disant qu'elle est la seule coupable. Pour la première fois, elle découvre que Zurga l'aime. Il se calme, mais sa jalousie se réveille à nouveau lorsqu'elle lui montre à quel point elle aime son rival. Il laisse Nourabad emmener Léïla au bûcher du sacrifice. Avant de partir, toutefois, elle remet à Zurga un collier pour qu'il l'envoie à sa mère. Il le reconnaît et court derrière eux pour la sauver.

Les pêcheurs de perles se préparent aux exécutions rituelles de Léïla et de Nadir, qui auront lieu au lever du soleil. Au dernier moment, Zurga apparaît et annonce que leur camp est en feu et que les femmes et les enfants sont en danger. Les pêcheurs partent en courant pour les sauver. Zurga révèle au couple captif que c'est lui que Léïla a sauvé il y a de nombreuses années et qu'il doit maintenant lui rembourser sa dette de gratitude pour le courage dont elle a fait preuve. Il avoue avoir lui-même mis le feu au camp pour leur donner une chance de partir et, avec reconnaissance, Léïla et Nadir s'échappent. Resté seul, Zurga doit faire face aux conséquences de ses actes.

Traduction: Marie-Stella Pâris

Rebecca Evans (Léïla) est née en Galles du Sud et a fait ses études à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Elle a reçu le soutien de la Peter Moores Foundation pour travailler avec Ronald Schneider à Vienne. Au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden, elle a interprété les rôles de Pamina (*La Flûte enchantée*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*) et Johanna (*Sweeney Todd*). Régulièrement invitée à la Bayerische Staatsoper de Munich, elle y a chanté Ginevra (*Ariodante*), Despina, Zdenka (*Arabella*), Ilia (*Idoménée*) et Susanna (*Les Noces de Figaro*). Elle a incarné Despina à la Deutsche Staatsoper de Berlin, Ilia à l'Opéra des Pays-Bas et Romilda (*Xerxes*), ainsi que la Gouvernante (*Le Tour d'écrou*) à l'English National Opera. Elle est l'une des chanteuses préférées au Welsh National Opera, où elle a été Mimì (*La Bohème*), Pamina, Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) et Norina (*Don Pasquale*).

Elle mène également une importante carrière lyrique aux États-Unis, où elle a interprété les rôles de Susanna et Zerlina au Metropolitan Opera de New York, Susanna à Santa Fe, Pamina et Adèle (*La Chauve-souris*) au Lyric Opera de Chicago, et Zerlina, Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) et Adina (*L'Elixir d'amour*) à l'opéra de San Francisco.

En concert, elle a chanté aux Proms de la BBC et aux festivals de Salzbourg, Édimbourg, Tanglewood et Ravinia. Parmi les orchestres avec lesquels elle a travaillé figurent l'Orchestre symphonique de San Francisco, l'Orchestre symphonique de Boston, l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment avec Sir Charles Mackerras, le Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra avec Eliot Gardiner et l'Orchestre symphonique de Sapporo avec Tadaaki Otaka.

Elle a reçu un Grammy Award et enregistré de manière prolifique ; dans la collection Opéra en anglais de Chandos, ses enregistrements comprennent les rôles de Gretel (*Hansel und Gretel*), Pamina (*La Flûte enchantée*), Ilia (*Idoménée*), Marzellina (*Fidelio*) et Susanna (*Les Noces de Figaro*). Chez Chandos, elle a également enregistré la *Messe en Ut majeur* de Beethoven et *Mass of Life* de Delius.

Diplômé du Royal Northern College of Music, où il bénéficia d'une bourse de la Peter Moores Foundation, Barry Banks (Nadir) s'est affirmé comme l'un des meilleurs interprètes actuels du répertoire du *bel canto* italien. Il est très demandé sur la scène lyrique internationale, se produisant notamment au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden, au Metropolitan Opera, à l'Opéra national de Paris, à l'English

National Opera, au Théâtre du Châtelet, au Festival de Salzbourg, à la Monnaie, à l'Opéra de Santa Fe et au Teatro Comunale de Bologne. Parmi les rôles qu'il a chantés figurent ceux de Lindoro (*L'Italienne à Alger*), Nemorino (*L'Elixir d'amour*), Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*), Oreste (*Ermione*), Tom Rakewell, Tamino (*La Flûte enchantée*), Don Narciso (*Le Turc en Italie*), Belfiore et Libenskoef (*Le Voyage à Reims*), l'Astrologue (*Le Coq d'or*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) et Uberto (*La donna del lago*).

En concert, Barry Banks a chanté la *Petite Messe solennelle* de Rossini avec le Royal Philharmonic Orchestra sous la direction de Daniele Gatti, Jaquino (*Fidelio*) avec l'Orchestre symphonique de la Ville de Birmingham sous la direction de Walter Weller, le *Requiem* de Bruckner avec le Scottish Chamber Orchestra sous la baguette de Sir Charles Mackerras et *Armida* de Rossini au Festival d'Édimbourg sous la direction de Carlo Rizzi. Parmi les autres points forts de cette carrière, on peut citer le *War Requiem* de Britten avec l'Orchestre philharmonique de Strasbourg sous la direction de Jan Latham-Koenig, *Ermione* de Rossini en concert à Carnegie Hall, ainsi que *Les Puritains* et *Linda di Chamounix* de Donizetti au Festival de Caramoor.

La discographie de Barry Banks comprend, dans la collection Opéra en anglais de Chandos, Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Giannetto (*The Thieving Magpie*) et Tamino (*The Magic Flute*) ainsi qu'un disque de grands airs d'opéra. Il a également enregistré *La Bohème*, *Un bal masqué* et *Trial by Jury*.

Simon Keenlyside (Zurga) est né à Londres; il a étudié la zoologie à Cambridge et le chant au Royal Northern College of Music de Manchester, où il a bénéficié d'une bourse de la Peter Moores Foundation.

Il a fait ses débuts lyriques à l'Opéra d'État de Hambourg dans le rôle du comte Almaviva (*Les Noces de Figaro*). Depuis lors, il a chanté à Genève (Hamlet et Pelléas), Zurich (Don Giovanni), Barcelone (Hamlet), Madrid (Posa), San Francisco (Pelléas), Sydney et Berlin (Figaro), Bruxelles (Orfeo), Paris (Papageno, Pelléas, Guglielmo, Eletski et Dandini), Vienne (Figaro, Marcello, le comte Almaviva, Billy Budd, Don Giovanni, Papageno et Posa), Munich (Marcello, le comte Almaviva et Wolfram), au Metropolitan Opera (Belcore, Marcello, Papageno et le comte Almaviva), au Festival de Salzbourg (Guglielmo et Papageno), à

la Scala de Milan (Papageno et le comte Almaviva) et au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden (notamment Billy Budd, le comte Almaviva, Don Giovanni, Valentin, Pelléas, Guglielmo et Papageno, ainsi que Prospero lors de la création mondiale de *La Tempête* d'Adès). Son interprétation de Billy Budd à l'English National Opera et de Winston lors de la première représentation mondiale de *1984* au Royal Opera House lui a valu l'Olivier Award 2006 de la réussite exceptionnelle dans le domaine de l'Opéra.

Simon Keenlyside jouit d'une longue carrière de concertiste et s'est produit en récital à New York, San Francisco, Lisbonne, Genève, Moscou, Paris, Amsterdam, Rome, Bruxelles, Londres, aux festivals d'Édimbourg, d'Aldeburgh, de Salzbourg et de Munich, à la Scala de Milan et à Vienne.

Parmi ses enregistrements on trouve des récitals de Schubert et Strauss, des lieder de Schumann, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, le rôle titre de *Don Giovanni*, *Carmina Burana*, Marcello dans *La Bohème* et le comte Almaviva (*Les Noces de Figaro*). En 2007, il a remporté le prix du meilleur récital décerné par le magazine *Gramophone* pour un disque d'airs avec orchestre. Au nombre de ses enregistrements chez Chandos on peut citer le rôle titre de *Billy*

Budd et Papageno (*The Magic Flute*) dans la collection Opéra en anglais.

Alastair Miles (Nourabad) est reconnu dans le monde entier comme l'une des plus grandes basses au monde. Il a chanté au Metropolitan Opera (Giorgio dans *Les Puritains* et Raimondo dans *Lucia di Lammermoor*), à l'Opéra national de Paris-Bastille (Raimondo), à Vienne (Philip II dans *Don Carlos*, Zachariah dans *Nabucco*, le Cardinal Brogni dans *La Juive* d'Halévy, de Silva dans *Ernani*, et Giorgio), à la Bayerische Staatsoper de Munich (le rôle titre de *Saul* et Zoroastro dans *Orlando*), à San Francisco (Giorgio, Raimondo et Basilio dans *Le Barbier de Séville*), Amsterdam (Figaro dans *Les Noces de Figaro*), Barcelone (*La Gioconda*), au Teatro Real de Madrid (Philippe II et Raimondo), à Palerme (Walter dans *Luisa Miller*); Séville (Mephistophélès dans *Faust*), à l'English National Opera (le rôle titre dans *Mephistofele* de Boito, Zachariah, de Silva, et Ford dans *Sir John in Love*), et au Royal Opera de Covent Garden (Rodolfo dans *La Somnambule*, Elmiro dans *Otello*, Frère Laurent dans *Roméo et Juliette*, Banquo dans *Macbeth*, et Dom Sebastien de Donizetti en concert (enregistré par Opera Rara)); et Mephistophélès dans

La Damnation de Faust en concert avec l'Orchestre symphonique de Londres et Sir Colin Davis à Londres et à New York.

Sa très brillante carrière de concertiste lui a permis de chanter dans le monde entier avec des chefs d'orchestre tels Giulini, Mehta, Muti, Chung, Masur, Gergiev, Gardiner et Sir Colin Davis et avec les plus prestigieux orchestres au monde. Sa discographie comprend actuellement plus de cinquante enregistrements, dont, chez Opera Rara, *Medea in Corinto* de Mayr, *Orazi e Curiazi* de Mercadante, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* de Donizetti, *Margherita d'Anjou* de Meyerbeer et *La Cour de Célimène* de Thomas. Il a aussi enregistré *Elias*, le Requiem de Verdi, *Saul* et *Agrippina* de Haendel, et, dans la collection Opéra en anglais de Chandos, il a enregistré Mephistophélès (*Faust*), Ramfis (*Aida*), Colline (*La Bohème*) et un disque de grands airs d'opéra.

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.

Au cours de la saison 2007/2008, le **London Philharmonic Orchestra** a célébré son soixante-quinzième anniversaire. Il a aussi accueilli son nouveau chef d'orchestre permanent, Vladimir Jurowski, et s'est réinstallé au Royal Festival Hall magnifiquement rénové.

Avec ses interprétations en concert ou à l'opéra, ses nombreux enregistrements primés, ses tournées internationales originales et son travail pédagogique novateur, le London Philharmonic Orchestra mérite depuis longtemps sa renommée pour son excellent niveau artistique et les multiples facettes de son talent. Des musiciens éminents qui ont joué un

rôle au sein de l'Orchestre depuis sa fondation en 1932 par Sir Thomas Beecham incluent, entre autres, Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt, Franz Welser-Möst et Kurt Masur. Orchestre symphonique résident du Royal Festival Hall depuis 1992, il présente dans cette salle ses grandes séries de concerts entre septembre et mai chaque année. Il est également orchestre symphonique résident du Glyndebourne Festival Opera depuis plus de quarante ans. Il se produit par ailleurs sur l'ensemble du Royaume-Uni et a fait de nombreuses tournées en Europe, en Amérique et au Japon, visitant aussi l'Inde, Hong-Kong, la Chine, l'Australie et l'Afrique du Sud.

Brad Cohen a obtenu son diplôme de St John's College à Oxford, puis a travaillé avec Celibidache et Bernstein en Allemagne; il a fait ses débuts professionnels au Festival d'Almeida en 1992. En 1994, il a reçu le premier prix au Concours de direction d'orchestre de Leeds et, depuis lors, il a dirigé l'Orchestre philharmonique de Londres, le Royal Philharmonic, le BBC National Orchestra of Wales, le BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, l'Orchestre

philharmonique de Stuttgart, l'Orchestre philharmonique de Stavanger, le Het Gelders Orkest, l'Orchestre symphonique de Melbourne, l'Orchestre symphonique national d'Irlande, le Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, le Scottish Chamber Orchestra, le City of London Sinfonia et l'Orchestre de St John's Smith Square.

Il a dirigé *De la maison des morts* et *Carmen* à l'English National Opera; *Carmen*, *La Veuve joyeuse*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *L'Elixir d'amour* et *La Cenerentola* à Opera Australia; *La Flûte enchantée*, *Les Pêcheurs de perles* et *The Reluctant King* à Opera North; *Rigoletto* et *Les Noces de Figaro* avec l'English Touring Opera. À l'Almeida Opera, il a dirigé la création mondiale de *Powder her Face* de Thomas Adès (également au Festival de Cheltenham, ainsi qu'à Bath et à Oxford) et *Wolfcub Village* et *Night Banquet* de Guo Wenjing (ainsi qu'au Festival de Hong Kong).

Dans le domaine lyrique, il a également dirigé *Les Vêpres siciliennes*, *Poliuto*, *Anna Bolena*, *André Chénier* et *Macbeth* avec le Chelsea Opera Group, *Macbeth* à l'Opéra de Nouvelle-Zélande, *La Chauve-Souris* à l'Opéra de Queensland, *Madama Butterfly*,

Manon Lescaut, *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, *Norma* et *Nabucco* à l'Opéra de Holland Park, *La traviata* à Lucerne, *Armida*, *Tancrède*, *Le Comte Ory*, *Cavalleria rusticana* et *Paillasse* au Royal Albert Hall, *Luisa Miller* et *Manon* au Nederlands Nationale Reisopera, et *Lucia di Lammermoor* à l'Opéra d'Angers/Nantes.

Brad Cohen est très engagé dans le répertoire de la musique nouvelle. Parmi ses diverses activités dans ce domaine, il s'intéresse à l'enregistrement vidéo d'opéras modernes pour la télévision; il a donné en tournée les pièces d'ensemble de Frank Zappa et il a commandé de la musique nouvelle pour l'inauguration du Millenium Dome. En 2002, il a assuré la direction musicale de l'opéra télévisé de Jonathan Dove *When She Died: Death of a Princess*. En 2006, la même équipe a créé l'opéra télévisé *Man on the Moon* pour Channel Four. Brad Cohen a aussi dirigé la première représentation australienne de l'opéra de Jonathan Dove *Flight* au Festival d'Adélaïde de 2006.

Brad Cohen est devenu un éditeur accompli dans le domaine lyrique; il a réalisé et publié des éditions de *Maometto secondo*, *Le Barbier de Séville* et *Norma*.

On session: Simon Keenlyside and Barry Banks



On session: Alastair Miles



The Pearl Fishers

Per quanto la Gran Bretagna potesse vantare l'impero coloniale più vasto ed esotico durante il XIX secolo, fu la Francia, più di tutti, ad attingere all'esotismo dei paesi lontani per utilizzarlo nell'arte, conquistandosi una supremazia di diritto in fatto di rappresentazioni di vicende orientali nel teatro lirico. I Britannici, bisogna dire, furono bravissimi a *dipingere* l'esotico (per quanto più tardi), ma i Francesi li eclissarono completamente per quanto riguarda la letteratura e la musica.

Il melodramma rappresentava un mezzo ideale per ritrarre l'esotico immaginario, perché riuniva letteratura, arte visiva e musica. Qua e là era possibile persino aggiungere qualche accenno di realtà, derivato dall'osservazione di alcuni eventi. Era possibile superare gli altri tipi d'arte attraverso la creazione di *tableaux vivants*, che proponessero eventi drammatici, sottolineati dalla musica e, soprattutto, dalla danza, perché non bisogna sottovalutare il ruolo sempre più determinante del balletto in costume nello spettacolo francese ottocentesco.

È utile spendere qualche parola sulla nozione di "esotismo", in cui rientrava la mo-

da orientaleggiante che ne fu parte importante, ma non predominante. Passando in rassegna il repertorio della letteratura, della pittura, del melodramma e del balletto, emergono aspetti esotici del Nord e dell'Ovest, oltre ai panorami dell'est. I Francesi sfruttarono ogni nozione di "altro", per creare il più delle volte nuovi stereotipi nazionali.

Per quanto riguarda l'Oriente, si possono rilevare diversi livelli di descrizione musicale. Alcuni compositori crearono opere sul tema dell'Esotico senza fare alcuno sforzo per adottare uno stile che includesse le tecniche musicali non occidentali. Un esempio è *Le Caïd* di Ambroise Thomas, opera buffa su un kaid o capo musulmano, che riscosse molto successo, per quanto fosse di sapore completamente italiano.

All'estremo opposto stanno compositori come Félicien David (1810–1876) che viaggiò in Medio Oriente e prese nota delle melodie orientali, pubblicandole in seguito. David fu apprezzato a livello internazionale per la sua Ode-symphonie *Le Désert* del 1844 che includeva melodie e tecniche di sapore orientale. *Les Troyens à Carthage* di Berlioz ha

poca musica di tipo orientale, fatta eccezione per un improvviso coro di schiavi nubiani, molto efficace.

Il nucleo di questi esperimenti fu normalmente uno stile orientale generico da cui scaturirono brani quasi indistinguibili che rappresentavano l'Africa, l'India e persino il Giappone e la Cina. Onnipresenti tra le tecniche musicali per evocare l'Oriente furono i bordoni e ostinati ritmici, oltre a una vasta presenza della percussione che si accompagnò all'uso di metallo lucido nei costumi. Gli strumenti prediletti furono i cimbali a dita e i tamburelli, oltre all'oboe e al clarinetto e talvolta l'ottavino, per riprodurre gli strumenti a fiato orientali; le scale vennero alterate con intervalli strani e si fece abbondante uso di acciacature e fioriture.

Nell'ambito del repertorio sempre più nutrito di opere orientali (che culminò alla fine del secolo in esemplari come *Thaïs* di Massenet), Bizet fu uno dei primi compositori ad adeguare il linguaggio musicale ai temi letterari esotici. Da questo punto di vista, *Les Pêcheurs de perles* (*I pescatori di perle*) rappresenta un esempio pionieristico ed è la prima opera in cui il giovane Bizet scopre una voce originale, creando un modo per insaporire molte delle formule prevedibili dell'Opéra-

Comique (l'istituzione) con dettagli musicali orientaleggianti che avrebbero portato al più concentrato melodramma in due atti *Djamileh* e, naturalmente, all'altro capolavoro esotico, *Carmen* (di sapore moresco piuttosto che orientale).

La critica accolse senza entusiasmo il libretto dei *Pêcheurs*, che doveva rientrare nel tradizionale formato per l'Opéra-Comique con dialoghi alternati a brani cantati. Dal momento che l'opera venne allestita al Théâtre-Lyrique, i cui statuti non richiedevano questa combinazione, il dialogo fu però trasformato in recitativo alla vigilia della prima. Fu inevitabile il paragone con l'argomento di un'opera oggi dimenticata, *La Vestale* di Spontini, riproposta molte volte durante l'Ottocento, ma accantonata dopo il 1850. Molti dei suoi brani preannunciano movimenti simili nei *Pêcheurs* per quanto riguarda il libretto, ma non per la musica.

Uno di questi esempi è la scena alla fine dell'Atto I (traccia [7](#)) in cui Lélia rivolge una preghiera agli dei, accompagnata dal coro dietro le quinte. L'uso delle "coulisses", il retroscena del teatro, era una tradizione che risaliva oltre l'Ottocento nelle tradizioni dell'Opéra-Comique: nessun sodalizio librettista-compositore degno di rispetto si

sarebbe lasciato sfuggire l'opportunità di sfruttarlo. In questo caso, il coro echeggia le parole di Léïla. La sua improvvisa apparizione in preghiera viene inquadrata da Bizet con un accompagnamento basso degli archi su cui si innalza la sua voce, aggiungendo prima abbellimenti di effetto orientale e poi trasformandoli in coloratura tipica da Théâtre-Lyrique, mentre il coro intona una melodia più tradizionale (e deliziosamente orecchiabile).

Nadir canta, anche lui non visto, sorpreso nel sentire la voce di lei. Poi chiama Léïla e la donna rimane altrettanto sorpresa nel sentire la voce di lui. Nella preghiera della sacerdotessa si insinua un delicato duetto d'amore, mentre il coro procede verso l'onnipresente e impossibile "Ah!" che, secondo la partitura, andrebbe eseguito a bocca chiusa (*à bouche fermée*).

Il Preludio dell'opera (traccia [1]) inizia senza inflessioni che facilitino l'inquadratura della scena. Bizet le aggiunge più tardi, accompagnando un ostinato con gli onnipresenti tamburelli e un coro; si tratta in realtà di un *tableau vivant* danzato (traccia [2]). Concepito come brano con scenografia, danza e canto, abbina ancora una volta la tradizione dell'opera francese con una musica genericamente orientale da balletto – nulla a che fare con la Ceylon

dell'ambientazione. Una caratteristica che divenne uno dei marchi di Bizet nella musica esotica fu l'introduzione improvvisa di strani accordi tenuti, come quelli sulla parola "chants". Un'altra tecnica, già osservata nella preghiera di Léïla, è quella di ritornare alla convenzione incontaminata dell'Opéra-Comique nella sezione centrale. Quando si verifica la ripresa del primo motivo, più orientale, un ampio passaggio orchestrale consente ai ballerini di avere tempo per uno sfoggio del loro talento: in complesso, si tratta di una brillante formula per aprire lo spettacolo orientale con una combinazione di danza, canto e scenografia opulenta.

Segue la scelta di Zurga come capo per la stagione di pesca delle perle, (traccia [3]) narrata con un convenzionale recitativo e seguita da una melodia all'unisono. Accordi strani e potenti accompagnano il brano con cui Zurga accoglie Nadir nel gruppo di pescatori ed esegue una danza dedicata al Sole per allontanare gli spiriti del male, (traccia [4]).

L'avvicinarsi del famoso duetto "Au fond du temple saint" ("Then from the holy shrine") narra dell'amicizia che unisce da sempre Nadir e Zurga, (traccia [5]). I due ricordano il giorno in cui avevano visto Léïla nel tempio e Bizet passa dalla discussione fraterna a questo

ricordo felice con una modulazione magistrale. Nel famoso duetto emergono le arpe, accompagnate da una lenta melodia intonata come un inno dall'orchestra; è un tema – forse il tema di Léïla – che ritornerà diverse volte. Il libretto utilizza un gruppo di luoghi comuni tipicamente orientali che ricorrono quando cui Zurga ricorda il momento in cui Léïla per un attimo aveva sollevato il suo velo: "Ô vision! Ô rêve!" il lento motivo viene sottolineato enfaticamente dagli ottoni. La musica diventa un'affermazione di amicizia e una promessa di rinuncia alla gelosia e alla passione. La conclusione postuma ripete il lento motivo che ha accompagnato il duetto (traccia [6]).

La scena seguente è dedicata a Nadir, (traccia [6]). Inizialmente il giovane si rimprovera per aver infranto le sue promesse, accompagnato da un tremolando con armonie agitate degli archi. Poi la musica si trasforma in una Romanza che evoca Léïla in un motivo delicatamente cadenzato. Nadir pensa di aver sentito la voce di lei in quest'aria simile a una berceuse, ancora una volta in tipico stile da Opéra-Comique, meravigliosamente e misuratamente orchestrata. Qui emerge la raffinata conoscenza dell'armonia da parte di Bizet: una chiave minore delicatamente modale crea un'atmosfera di ricordo e desiderio

struggente, e un senso dell'eternità di una notte d'attesa. Poi arriva la scena già citata in cui Léïla prega, seguita dalla sua Cavatina, dopo un recitativo in cui attende Nadir. Il brano è uno dei momenti più memorabili dell'opera, anche se non reca traccia alcuna delle tecniche orientali (traccia [8]). Dimostra la padronanza di Bizet della tipica aria in stile Opéra-Comique, con un sensibile debito allo stile di Gounod. Nadir risponde con una Chanson (traccia [9]) in cui si riconoscono tangibili tracce di gusto esotico. Si avvicina, cantando da lontano, accompagnato dalle arpe fuori scena. Bizet divenne sempre più abile nell'uso dell'espedito delle *coulisses*, non solo dal punto di vista drammatico, ma anche da quello musicale: basti pensare al brano di *Carmen* in cui la protagonista danza la Romalis per Don José, mentre fuori scena si sente il suono delle trombe della ritirata.

Léïla, scossa e affascinata, lo sente arrivare. Il magico brano si trasforma nell'Allegro molto di un duetto da "batticuore" (traccia [10]) con l'incontro della coppia; è l'orchestra – cosa non infrequente nel repertorio operistico francese – a suggerire il ritmo del batticuore in questa scena musicale, una delle più lunghe dell'opera, che si conclude con un duetto più lirico.

Il primo tableau dell'Atto III è dedicato a un assolo di Zurga (traccia ^[11]) dopo la descrizione di un temporale nell'introduzione orchestrale, piena di passaggi con vortuose armonie e sottolineata dal tuono dei timpani. Dal soliloquio che segue è chiaro che la tempesta è una metafora del tormento intimo di Zurga e il suo recitativo è punteggiato a tratti dalla musica della tempesta. Zurga infine arriva a chiedersi se Nadir, il suo amico di sempre, possa perdonare la sua gelosia. Entra Léïla (traccia ^[12]) e sconvolge Zurga. In lontananza ritorna il lento motivo simile a un inno e l'aria di Léïla si trasforma in un duetto mentre supplica di risparmiare la vita di Nadir. Inizialmente Zurga perdona, ma poi il suo tormento gli fa cambiare idea mentre il velo di Léïla viene strappato. Li condanna entrambi a morte, facendo valere il suo potere.

Questo momento interamente musicale sarebbe diventato il modo di Bizet per portare l'azione drammatica alla conclusione, una tecnica che avrebbe utilizzato ancora una volta magistralmente in *Carmen* sovvertendo, ma ampliando la tradizionale *opéra à numéros* dell'Opéra-Comique. Mentre la tensione sale, Léïla maledice lo spietato Zurga e lo definisce un mostro. L'ultima parola spetta al coro.

Un'appendice è il Trio del 1893 (traccia ^[17]) in cui Nadir e Zurga cantano del loro amore per Léïla che li accetta entrambi; è attribuito al compositore Benjamin Godard.

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Argomento (I brani registrati sono in grassetto)

Atto I

La vicenda si svolge tra un gruppo di pescatori di perle che abitano sull'isola di Ceylon, nell'Oceano Indiano. Dopo un breve **preludio** si vedono i pescatori e le loro famiglie mentre lavorano, cantano e ballano. **Zurga, ricorda a tutti che è necessario eleggere un capo e tutti gli altri, concordi, gli giurano fedeltà.**

Entra un altro giovane pescatore, Nadir, e Zurga lo riconosce: è un suo vecchio compagno. Durante i loro viaggi, in un tempio di Kandy, entrambi si erano ritrovati rivali, innamorati della stessa sacerdotessa. Per questo si erano separati e avevano giurato di non rivederla mai più, ma oggi si promettono eterna amicizia: il ricordo della sacerdotessa non li separerà.

Il gran sacerdote di Brahma, Nourabad, conduce la sacerdotessa scelta per pregare

e tenere a bada gli spiriti del male, in vista della prossima spedizione di pesca. Zurga le impone un voto di castità, pena la morte. La perla più bella sarà la sua ricompensa per la protezione che darà ai pescatori. **Per quanto la donna sia velata, Nadir ne riconosce la voce: è la sacerdotessa di cui si è innamorato e, rimasto solo, confessa di averla seguita fin qui. Rimane in ascolto mentre Léïla inizia la preghiera, ma non riesce a resistere e la chiama; lei si interrompe e risponde con amore.**

Atto II

I pescatori sono rientrati sani e salvi, e Léïla è libera dalla veglia della sera. Come dimostrazione della sua capacità di mantenere la promessa, racconta a Nourabad che, da bambina, aveva salvato la vita di un fuggiasco e non lo aveva mai consegnato ai suoi inseguitori. In segno di gratitudine, l'uomo le aveva regalato una collana che lei porta tuttora.

Nourabad lascia Léïla e lei canta una cavatina, piena d'amore. Nadir la raggiunge nel recinto sacro e i due si ritrovano, felici. Ma sono stati scoperti e, mentre si scatena una violenta tempesta, vengono catturati e denunciati per sacrilegio da Nourabad. Zurga cerca di proteggere il suo amico dalla furia

degli indigeni superstiziosi, che ne chiedono la morte immediata. Nourabad alimenta la sommossa e a Léïla viene strappato il velo. Riconoscendo in lei la sacerdotessa del tempio di Kandy, Zurga si rende conto che Nadir ha tradito il giuramento e condanna irosamente a morte la coppia colpevole.

Atto III

La rabbia di Zurga si è placata e l'uomo medita tristemente sul destino di Nadir. Léïla cerca di intercedere per lui, assumendosi esclusivamente la colpa di tutto. Per la prima volta si rende conto che Zurga è innamorato di lei. L'uomo si lascia commuovere, ma la sua gelosia si riaccende quando la donna manifesta il suo profondo amore per il rivale, e la consegna a Nourabad perché la conduca alla pira sacrificale. Prima di allontanarsi, però, la donna consegna a Zurga una collana da inviare a sua madre. L'uomo la riconosce e rincorre i due per salvarla.

I pescatori di perle si preparano al rito dell'esecuzione di Léïla e Nadir, fissato per l'alba, quando entra Zurga e annuncia che l'accampamento ha preso fuoco: le donne e i bambini sono in pericolo. I pescatori di perle si precipitano a salvare i propri cari. Zurga rivela alla coppia prigioniera che era lui il

fuggiasco salvato da Leila molti anni prima e che adesso desidera ripagare il proprio debito. È stato proprio lui ad appiccare il fuoco all'accampamento per dare alla coppia la possibilità di allontanarsi e, con gratitudine, Léila e Nadir fuggono. Zurga rimane solo ad affrontare le conseguenze delle sue azioni.

Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Rebecca Evans (Léila) è nata in Galles e ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Con l'appoggio della Peter Moores Foundation si è perfezionata con Ronald Schneider a Vienna. Alla Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, ha cantato Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*), e Johanna (*Sweeney Todd*). È ospite regolare della Bayerische Staatsoper di Monaco, dove ha interpretato, tra l'altro, Ginevra (*Ariodante*), Despina, Zdenka (*Arabella*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*) e Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*). È stata Despina per la Deutsche Staatsoper di Berlino, Ilia per la Netherlands Opera e, per English National Opera, Romilda (*Xerxes*), e la Governante (*The Turn of the Screw*). È una beniamina della Welsh National Opera e qui i suoi ruoli hanno

incluso Mimì (*La Bohème*), Pamina, Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) e Norina (*Don Pasquale*).

Rebecca Evans svolge un'importante carriera operistica anche in America, dove ha cantato Susanna e Zerlina alla Metropolitan Opera di New York, Susanna a Santa Fe; Pamina e Adèle (*Die Fledermaus*) alla Lyric Opera di Chicago e Zerlina, Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) e Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*) all'Opera di San Francisco.

L'attività concertista include la partecipazione ai Prom della BBC e ai festival di Salisburgo, Edimburgo, Tanglewood e Ravinia. L'artista ha collaborato con la San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, la Boston Symphony Orchestra, l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment con sir Charles Mackerras, il Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra con Eliot Gardiner e la Sapporo Symphony Orchestra con Tadaaki Otaka.

Rebecca Evans ha ricevuto un Grammy e ha al suo attivo una ricca discografia. Le registrazioni per la serie Opera in English di Chandos comprendono Gretel (*Hänsel and Gretel*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Marzellina (*Fidelio*) e Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*). Tra le altre registrazioni per Chandos ricordiamo la Messa in do maggiore di Beethoven e la *Mass of Life* di Delius.

Diplomato presso il Royal Northern College of Music dove ha studiato grazie a una borsa di studio della Peter Moores Foundation, **Barry Banks** (Nadir) si è conquistato un posto tra i migliori interpreti odierni del repertorio belcantistico. È molto richiesto nei teatri lirici internazionali e ha collaborato con la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, la Metropolitan Opera, l'Opéra National de Paris, la English National Opera, il Théâtre du Châtelet, il Festival di Salisburgo, La Monnaie, l'Opera di Santa Fe e il Teatro Comunale di Bologna, tra l'altro. I suoi ruoli comprendono Lindoro (*L'italiana in Algeri*), Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*), Don Ramiro (*La Cenerentola*), Oreste (*Ermione*), Tom Rakewell, Tamino (*Il flauto magico*), Don Narciso (*Il turco in Italia*), Belfiore e Libenskoef (*Il viaggio a Reims*), L'Astrologue (*Le Coq d'or*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) e Uberto (*La donna del lago*).

In concerto, Barry Banks ha interpretato la *Petite Messe solennelle* di Rossini con la Royal Philharmonic Orchestra diretta da Daniele Gatti, Jaquino (*Fidelio*) con la City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra diretta da Walter Weller, il Requiem di Bruckner con la Scottish Chamber Orchestra diretta da sir Charles Mackerras e *Armida* di Rossini al Festival di Edimburgo, per la direzione di

Carlo Rizzi. Altre collaborazioni importanti lo hanno visto interprete del *War Requiem* di Britten con l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg diretta da Jan Latham-Koenig, *Ermione* di Rossini in concerto al Carnegie Hall e *I puritani* e *Linda di Chamonix* di Donizetti al Caramoor Festival.

La discografia di Barry Banks include, per la serie Opera in English di Chandos, Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), Ernesto (*Don Pasquale*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Giannetto (*The Thieving Magpie*) e Tamino (*The Magic Flute*) oltre a un disco di arie famose (Great Operatic Arias). Altre registrazioni comprendono *La Bohème*, *Un ballo in maschera* e *Trial by Jury*.

Simon Keenlyside (Zurga) è nato a Londra, ha studiato zoologia a Cambridge e canto presso il Royal Northern College of Music di Manchester, con il sostegno di una borsa di studio di Peter Moores.

Il suo esordio in teatro si è svolto all'Opera di Amburgo nelle vesti del Conte Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*); in seguito è comparso nei teatri di Ginevra (Hamlet e Pelléas), Zurigo (Don Giovanni), Barcellona (Hamlet), Madrid (Posa), San Francisco (Pelléas), Sydney e Berlino (Figaro), Bruxelles (Orfeo), Parigi

(Papageno, Pelléas, Guglielmo, Yeletsky e Dandini), Vienna (Figaro, Marcello, Conte Almaviva, Billy Budd, Don Giovanni, Papageno e Posa), Monaco (Marcello, Conte Almaviva e Wolfram), Metropolitan Opera (Belcore, Marcello, Papageno e Conte Almaviva), Festival di Salisburgo (Guglielmo e Papageno), La Scala di Milano (Papageno e Conte Almaviva) e Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (in ruoli tra cui Billy Budd, Conte Almaviva, Don Giovanni, Valentin, Pelléas, Guglielmo, Papageno e Prospero nella prima mondiale di *The Tempest* di Adès). Le interpretazioni dei ruoli di Billy Budd per la English National Opera e Winston nella prima mondiale di *1984* alla Royal Opera House gli hanno conquistato nel 2006 un Olivier Award.

Simon Keenlyside si esibisce spesso in concerto ed è comparso in recital a New York, San Francisco, Lisbona, Ginevra, Mosca, Parigi, Amsterdam, Roma, Bruxelles, Londra, ai festival di Edimburgo, Aldeburgh, Salisburgo e Monaco, alla Scala di Milano e a Vienna.

La discografia include recital di brani di Schubert e Strauss, un disco di *lieder* di Schumann, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, il ruolo di protagonista nel *Don Giovanni*, *Carmina Burana*, Marcello in *Bohème*, e il Conte Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Un disco di arie

orchestrali ha vinto il premio Gramophone 2007 per i recital. Le registrazioni per Chandos hanno compreso il ruolo di protagonista in *Billy Budd* e Papageno (*The Magic Flute*) nell'ambito della serie Opera in English.

Alastair Miles (Nourabad) ha una reputazione internazionale ed è considerato uno dei migliori bassi a livello mondiale. Ha cantato in numerosi teatri, tra cui la Metropolitan Opera House (Giorgio nei *Puritani* e Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*), l'Opéra National de Paris-Bastille (Raimondo) Vienna (Filippo II in *Don Carlos*, Zaccaria in *Nabucco*, il Cardinal Brogni ne *La Juive* di Halévy, de Silva in *Ernani* e Giorgio); la Bayerische Staatsoper di Monaco (ruolo di protagonista nel *Saul* e Zoroastro in *Orlando*). È comparso inoltre a San Francisco (Giorgio, Raimondo e Basilio nel *Barbiere di Siviglia*), Amsterdam (Figaro nelle *Nozze di Figaro*), Barcellona (*La Gioconda*), al Teatro Real di Madrid (Filippo II e Raimondo), Palermo (Walter in *Luisa Miller*), Siviglia (Mefistofele nel *Faust*), English National Opera (ruolo di protagonista nel *Mefistofele* di Boito, Zaccaria, de Silva, e Ford in *Sir John in Love*), Royal Opera, Covent Garden (Rodolfo nella *Sonnambula*, Elmiro in *Otello*, Frère Laurent in *Roméo et*

Juliette, Banquo in *Macbeth*, e interpretazioni in concerto di *Dom Sebastien* di Donizetti, melodramma registrato anche da Opera Rara); infine, Mephistopheles ne *La damnation de Faust* in alcuni concerti con la London Symphony Orchestra diretta da sir Colin Davis a Londra e New York.

L'artista ha riscosso grandi successi anche nella sua attività concertistica, che lo ha visto esibirsi in tutto il mondo con importanti direttori tra cui Giulini, Mehta, Muti, Chung, Masur, Gergiev, Gardiner e sir Colin Davis e con le orchestre più prestigiose. La discografia attualmente riunisce oltre 50 registrazioni tra cui, per Opera Rara, *Medea in Corinto* di Mayr, *Orazi e Curiazi* di Mercadante, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* di Donizetti, *Margherita d'Anjou* di Meyerbeer e *La Cour de Célimène* di Thomas. Altre registrazioni comprendono *Elijah*, la Messa da requiem di Verdi, *Saul e Agrippina* di Handel, e, per la serie Opera in English di Chandos, i ruoli di Mephistopheles (*Faust*), Ramfis (*Aida*), Colline (*La Bohème*), oltre a un disco di brani operistici famosi (Great Operatic Arias).

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.

Durante la stagione 2007/08 la **London Philharmonic Orchestra** ha festeggiato il settantacinquesimo anniversario, ha dato il benvenuto a un nuovo Direttore stabile, Vladimir Jurowski ed è ritornata nella propria sede, la Royal Festival Hall, oggi splendidamente ristrutturata.

Grazie alle sue esibizioni nelle sale da concerto e nei teatri lirici, alle numerose registrazioni premiate, alle tournée internazionali di straordinario successo e al pionieristico lavoro didattico, la London

Philharmonic Orchestra ha tempo conquistato un'altissima reputazione di versatilità ed eccellenza artistica. I collaboratori illustri dell'Orchestra dal 1932, anno della sua fondazione ad opera di sir Thomas Beecham, sono sir Adrian Boult, sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt e Franz Welser-Möst e Kurt Masur. Orchestra sinfonica residente dal 1992 presso la Royal Festival Hall, dove presenta ogni anno la sua principale serie di concerti tra settembre e maggio, la London Philharmonic Orchestra è anche l'orchestra sinfonica residente della Glyndebourne Festival Opera da oltre quarant'anni; in più si esibisce in tutto il Regno Unito, ha svolto numerose tournées in Europa, America e Giappone, raggiungendo l'India, Hong Kong, la Cina, l'Australia e il Sudafrica.

Brad Cohen ha conseguito la laurea a Oxford (St John's College) e ha studiato con Celibidache e Bernstein in Germania. Ha esordito in veste professionale all'Almeida Festival nel 1992. Nel 1994 vinceva il primo premio al concorso per direttori d'orchestra di Leeds; in seguito ha diretto numerose orchestre tra cui London Philharmonic, la Royal Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra

of Wales, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, Het Gelders Orkest, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, City of London Sinfonia e l'Orchestra di St John's Smith Square.

In teatro ha diretto *From the House of the Dead* e *Carmen* per English National Opera; *Carmen*, *The Merry Widow*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *L'elisir d'amore* e *La Cenerentola* per Opera Australia; *The Magic Flute*, *The Pearl Fishers* and *The Reluctant King* per Opera North; *Rigoletto* e *Figaro* per English Touring Opera. Per l'Almeida Opera ha diretto la prima mondiale di *Powder Her Face* di Thomas Adès' (in seguito anche al Cheltenham Festival, a Bath e Oxford), *Wolfcub Village* e *Night Banquet* di Guo Wenjing (anche all'Hong Kong Festival).

Le altre collaborazioni in teatro comprendono *Les vêpres siciliennes*, *Poliuto*, *Anna Bolena*, *Andrea Chénier* e *Macbeth* per il Chelsea Opera Group, *Macbeth* per Opera New Zealand, *Die Fledermaus* per Opera Queensland, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Pearl Fishers*, *Norma* e *Nabucco* per Opera Holland Park, *La traviata* per Lucerna, *Armida*,

Tancredi, *Le Comte Ory*, *Cavalleria rusticana* e *Pagliacci* alla Royal Albert Hall, *Luisa Miller* e *Manon* per la Nederlands Nationale Reisopera, e *Lucia di Lammermoor* per il teatro lirico di Angers/Nantes.

Brad Cohen è molto impegnato nell'esecuzione di musica nuova. Le sue molteplici attività in questo campo comprendono le riprese televisive di opere moderne, tournée di esecuzione dei brani di Frank Zappa e commissioni di musica per l'inaugurazione del Millennium Dome a

Londra. Nel 2002 è stato direttore musicale del melodramma *When She Died: Death of a Princess* di Jonathan Dove per la televisione. Nel 2006 la stessa équipe ha creato l'opera TV *Man on the Moon* per Channel Four. Brad Cohen ha inoltre diretto la prima australiana dell'opera *Flight* di Jonathan Dove al Festival di Adelaide nel 2006.

Brad Cohen è un illustre editore di opere e ha completato e pubblicato edizioni di *Maometto secondo*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* e *Norma*.

On session: Barry Banks and Rebecca Evans



On session: Brad Cohen



from Act I

1 Prelude

No 1a, Introduction

Chorus

- 2** At the break of day with the waves at play
we obey our calling.
Let the maidens dance in a magic trance
till the night is falling.
'Away, away!' let them shout,
'away, away, evil spirits out!'
Let the maidens dance in a magic trance.
We claim the mighty ocean:
here our bounty will lie.
To the waves' constant motion
we come prepared to die.
Far beneath them we forage
where deeper currents whirl.
A pearl rewards our courage,
a pure, a shining pearl.
At the break of day with the waves at play
we obey our calling.
Let the maidens dance in a magic trance
till the night is falling.
'Away, away!' Let them shout,
'away, away, evil spirits out!'
Dance on, dance all night, dance on
in a magic trance, dance on!

No 1b, Scene and Chorus

Zurga

- 3** My friends, you must delay your dances and
your games;
for today we must choose a leader to command us
who will protect us and will defend us:
a man we all can trust, who is good, who is brave.

Chorus

The man we want to be our master
and we will choose to take command.
Zurga, dear friend, Zurga, dear friend, is you!

Zurga

Who, me?

Chorus

Yes, you shall be our lord!
Yes, you must take command!
Zurga, Zurga shall be our king and take
command!

Zurga

And will you swear to obey me?

Chorus

We shall obey!

Zurga

And the power shall be in my hands?

Chorus

We shall obey!

Zurga

So be it! I accept, I accept.

Chorus

We shall obey, for now the power shall be in your
hands!
We shall obey, we shall obey.
But who is this?

Zurga

Nadir! Nadir! My dearest friend from childhood.
Can it be true that you are here?

Chorus

Friend Nadir, you've returned at last.

Nadir

Yes, Nadir! From my wandering years
I have come back to you, to your love and your
friendship.
In the jungle's darkest heart
I learned that man has to live apart,
in the jungle's darkest heart,
I learned the mystery of total silence.
Tiger crouching with burning eye
and panther waiting to seize his prey,
and I with dagger at the ready!
I lived with mortal danger out there:
you face it here as well.

I have returned! Welcome back, welcome back
your friend.

Chorus

Come on, come on, welcome back our friend.

No 1c, Recitative and Chorus reprise

Zurga

- 4** Stay here and live with us, Nadir, with those
who love you.

Nadir

Yes, I share your desires; I shall live here among
you.

Zurga

My friend, you'll drink and you'll dance.
For now the time has come:
we must dive and take our chance.
But first, we shall dance in devotion
to the gods of the sun, the sky, the mighty ocean.

Chorus

At the break of day with the waves at play
we obey our calling.
Let the maidens dance in a magic trance
till the night is falling.
'Away, away!' let them shout,
'away, away, evil spirits out!'
Dance on in a magic trance,
Yes, let the maidens dance in a magic trance!

No 2a, Recitative

Zurga

5 At last I have found you again!
After so many days, so many weeks and months
when we have lived our lives far away from each
other
Brahma gives us joy and brings us back together.
But tell me, have you been always faithful to your
vow?
Am I reunited with a friend or with a traitor?

Nadir

However deep my love, I learned to be its master.

Zurga

Well then! Come, let us drink to friendship's
sweet return.
I, too, learned to be calm, to cast away my sadness
and to forget that day of madness...

Nadir

No, no, you lie!
I see that you may be calm, but I swear you
cannot forget!

Zurga

What do you mean?

Nadir

Zurga, even when we two are old and grey,
when the hopes and the dreams of youth are
erased from our fading thoughts,

you will remember still what happened on our
journey,
when we arrived outside the city gates.

Zurga

The sun had set!
The priests, wreathed in gold, had appeared
and their chanting rang out through the warm
scented air
as they summoned the crowd of worshippers to
prayer.

No 2b, Duet

Nadir

6 Then from the holy shrine,
adorned with flowers and jewels,
like a phantom she rose,
the girl that haunts my soul.

Zurga

...like a phantom she rose,
the girl that haunts my soul.

Nadir

A hush descended round her;
people stared, full of wonder,
in the stillness they sighed:
Look there! Behold the goddess.
She has come here among us
See her arms opened wide!

Zurga

She lifts her veil a moment...
Oh blessed sight! Oh rapture!
The people fall to the ground...

Nadir and Zurga

Yes, a goddess, truly a goddess
of such rare, radiant beauty!
Yes, a goddess, truly a goddess
sent among us on earth
for our delight and torment
who beside her have no worth.

Nadir

Slowly she moves among them,
still intent on her duty...

Zurga

...but already her veil conceals
her radiant beauty...

Nadir

And her face, alas, cannot be seen...

Zurga

She is gone!

Nadir

She is gone!
But like a stab of pain an unknown desire engulfs
me!

Zurga

A raging fire overwhelms me!

Nadir

Again it drives us apart!

Zurga

Again it drives us apart!

Nadir

Both our hearts are filled with anger:
we are enemies once more.

Zurga

No, let nothing come between us!

Nadir

Nothing!

Zurga

Our friendship shall never end!

Nadir and Zurga

I swear, our friendship shall never end!
Friendship is sacred so let the friendship that
we plighted
banish from my soul passion's fatal call.
We shall go hand in hand, our wandering
paths united,
faithful unto death, till our final breath.
We shall go hand in hand, our wandering
paths united...

We shall live as one, ah! my friend, until we both shall die.

Zurga

I kept my word for since the day we met her
I have lived far away here and have seen her no more.

Nadir

I had to flee, for I could not forget her:
so in the jungle's heart I tried to find a cure.

Nadir and Zurga

Here at your side I shall help you forget her.
we shall live here as brothers now, as we did before!
Friendship is sacred: so let the friendship we plighted
banish from my soul passion's fatal call.
We shall go hand in hand, our wandering paths united,
faithful until death, till our final breath.
We shall go hand in hand, wandering paths united...
We shall live as one, ah! my friend, until we both shall die.
Our sacred friendship shall unite us.
Faithful unto death, till our final breath,
we two shall live as one, my friend, until we die.

No 4a, Recitative

Nadir

- [7] Hearing her voice my soul is a cauldron of passion!
What desperate hope has made me behave in this fashion?
Alas, so many times before, inflamed with love,
my eyes have conjured up her sweet face from above...
No, no, I am on fire...
Remorse has made me giddy...
Zurga shall know the truth,
I should have told him already.
I took a solemn oath and betrayed it for love.
I knew I had to see her: to seek her out by stealth.
On the darkest of nights, so quiet I held my breath,
I at last heard her voice borne aloft on the breezes.

No 4b, Romance

Nadir

- [8] Again her voice will haunt me with memories of love,
her voice as sweet as honey, as the song of the dove.
Oh sing of passion's fever, of love's forbidden store!
Oh let me dream once more, dream forever or perish!
Through a night full of longing the stars above will shine
on her image still hovering like some angel divine.

No 5, Air and Chorus

Leïla

- [9] Brahma the god,
sovereign of the world, we salute you!

Chorus

Brahma the god! Brahma the god!

Leïla

Shiva the fair,
reigning at his side, we salute you!

Chorus

Shiva the fair!

Leïla

Come, spirits, here, come, we salute you!
From the rock, the waters, the skies...
At my voice arise, at my voice arise!

Nadir

Ah! That sweet voice again...

Chorus

Spirits of earth! Spirits of water! Spirits of air!

Leïla

Through the azure twilight,
Radiant in the starlight,
Through the heady air of the scented night,
Faithful to my station I guard my new nation

I gaze out there to keep those I guard in sight.
Hear me, I implore you, let my heart adore you!
My voice will soar light as a bird over you evermore.

Chorus

Sing on, sing on forever!
Sweet voice, sing on forever!
Watch over us, we pray,
and keep all danger far away!

Leïla

Ah!

Nadir

Gods! I hear her! Leïla! Leïla!
You have nothing to fear!
I am here at your side!
Ready to die for you,
to shed my blood to save you!

Chorus

Sing on, sing on forever!
Sweet voice, sing on forever!

Leïla

He is there! He is listening!
I sing for you, I adore you,
sing my song forever,
my song for you, my dearest forever.
He is there! He is listening!

Nadir
I will stay by your side!

Leïla
Ah! Ah!

Nadir
Leïla! I will stay...
Leïla! At your side...

from Act II

No 7, Recitative and Cavatina
Leïla

[10] I am alone here in the night.
Alone in this abandoned place,
deep silence all around me.
I am trembling with fear:
I shall not sleep tonight.
But he is there, I know that he has come to find me.
As once before in night's deep silence,
out there where the dark shadows move,
he watches and I feel his presence
and I can sleep dreaming of love.
He watches over me as once before.
I know it was him that I saw,
I know that he did not forget me.
Radiant joy! I never expected:
he has returned to me once more.
He is there; he has returned;
and my heart beats with joy, ah!

No 8, Chanson

Nadir

[11] My love was weeping while she was sleeping,
a flower beneath the waters cold;
she woke thereafter and her sweet laughter
rang out the theme of joys untold
like chimes of gold.

Nadir

A gloomy place full of malice
would try to hide her from my sight;...
but none could capture the bright rapture...
of eyes that shine through darkest night...
their radiant light, their radiant light!

Leïla

Gods!
That voice in the distance...
In the depths of my being...
Heavens! Ah! His voice!

No 9, Duo

Nadir

[12] Leïla! Leïla!

Leïla

Mighty gods, he is here!

Nadir

Yes, I am here at last!

Leïla

But how could you have come?
The path is dark and narrow: below lies an abyss.

Nadir

The spirits led me here, the call of joy and sorrow:
no, nothing could deny me this.

Leïla

But you should not have come!
Go, for death will reward you...

Nadir

Ah, do not be afraid, I beg you!

Leïla

By my vow you know I cannot listen, alas!
not even look at you.

Nadir

Ah, Show some pity!

Leïla

The penalty is death!

Nadir

Do not reject me now!

Leïla

Ah! Ah go!

Nadir

Ah! The dawn is far away still and nothing can
disturb us.

Ah! Leïla, ah! Leïla, look kindly on your slave!

Leïla

No, you cannot stay!

Nadir

Ah! How can you deny...

Leïla

You know that they will kill me!

Nadir

The desires that fill me?

Leïla

Ah! Ah go!

Nadir

Leïla Leïla!

Leïla

Ah! You bring us certain death!

Ah! Leave at once, I beg of you.

Nadir

Alas!

Your heart would never beat with mine:
when, lost in the night's sweet embrace,

hearing your song's unearthly grace,
my soul leapt and my heart would race,
your heart would never beat with mine.

Leïla

Your beating heart was not alone:
when, lost in the night's darkest place,
I felt you watch with silent grace
and my soul longed for love's embrace,
your beating heart was not alone.

Nadir

I gave my word to renounce you forever,
that I'd be silent until I die.
But I have failed alas!
Look! I tremble with fever!
A love so deep is too strong to deny.

Leïla

Through lonely nights, uncertain nights of
silence,
my soul had gazed in the depths of your soul:
so I could wait, wait for your shining presence,
wait for the joy of our love's final call.

Nadir

Can it be? Can it be?
You are mine evermore?

Leïla

Ah!
Your beating heart was not alone:

when, lost in the night's darkest place,
I felt you watch with silent grace
and my soul longed for love's embrace,
your beating heart was not alone.
Your heart was not ever alone.

Nadir

Yes! Your heart I know would beat with mine:
when, lost in the night's sweet embrace,
hearing your song's unearthly grace,
my soul leapt and my heart would race,
I know your heart would beat with mine.

from Act III

**No 11, Entr'acte, Recitative and Air
Zurga**

^[13] The storm has run its course,
the winds will howl no longer:
the gods have forgotten their anger;
but I cannot be calm, can find no peace of mind.
A terrible obsession like a fever devours me
to haunt my soul forever: Nadir, Nadir, ah!
Nadir will die at dawn and the blame must be
mine.
Oh Nadir, once a tender love would bind us:
oh Nadir now I have sentenced you to death.
Oh Nadir, alas, will rage and passion blind us,
will jealous rage and passion blind us
in the hour of your final breath?
No, no, I have been dreaming,

I dreamt that you were scheming:
I know you could not bear the shame,
that I have only myself to blame.
I was weak... I was mad...
What have I done?
Oh Nadir, once a tender love would bind us...
Oh Leïla, radiant soul set apart...
Oh Nadir, oh Leïla, can you pardon my act of
blindness
the folly of my heart,
of my shattered, tormented heart?
I am filled with remorse and anguish!
Nadir! Leïla! Alas!
I shudder at what I have done.
Ah! Can you pardon the folly of my shattered
heart?
Can you forgive?

No 12, Scene and Duo

No 12a, Recitative

Zurga

^[14] (She is here!
My heart... is pounding...
I am on fire just to see her once more...)
It is you!
Who has sent you?

Leïla

May I speak to you here?
You alone...

Zurga

Very well.
Go! Leave her here.

No 12b, Duo

Leïla

^[15] (I would speak, but I cannot:
for a heart full of anger, alas, does not want to
hear.
Beneath his gaze I tremble with terror,
for a heart full of anger does not want to hear.
I would speak, but I cannot,
under his gaze I am trembling with fear.
Alas, he will never want to hear, alas, with a heart
full of anger!)

Zurga

(I am weak as I watch her... Leïla, mine no
longer,
yet more lovely now she must perish, near to
death yet more dear!
Yes, the gods, eager to punish,
eager to punish me, have brought her here.
Yes, I am weak, I am weak... Ah! Leïla, mine no
longer!)

You need not fear. Come closer, come closer:
I will listen.

Leïla

Zurga, I come to kneel before you,
that by Brahma the god

humbly I may implore you
to spare a blameless man, and let me die alone.

Zurga
What? Blameless man? He, Nadir? Is it true?
Tell me quickly! You were waiting for him in our
most sacred shrine...

Leïla
I swear it was by chance he found me, not design.

Zurga
Can I believe you?

Leïla
May I be cursed forever if I am lying to you now.
Ah Zurga, I come to kneel before you,
alas, that by Brahma the god
you may spare him, that blameless man,
and let me die alone, Zurga.
Ah! Pity me, Zurga, consent, consent,
ah! to spare a blameless man, and let me die alone.
Consent, Zurga, consent, ah!

Zurga
(Can it be? To our vow
and to our sacred friendship, can it be?
To our vow and to our sacred friendship,
he was true?
Nadir, you did not break your word, no,
Nadir, you did not break your word!
Oh what joy! Oh what joy! Yes! Nadir! Ah!)

Leïla
I fear not for myself, Zurga,
I'm frightened for Nadir!
Ah! Be our saviour, our supporter:
blind anger must not win.
His soul is mine forever:
he is my one, my all.
Today that passion, alas, must answer to death's call.

Zurga
(His soul is hers...)
(...answer death's call...)

Leïla
Pity us, Zurga, pity us! Ah!
Soften your righteous anger,
hear my despairing cry,
ah, tell me you will save his life,
Zurga I beg you, tell me you will save him,
that in peace I may die.

Zurga
What is this?

Leïla
Hear my despairing cry:
ah, tell me you will save him,
that in peace I may die.

Zurga
That in peace you may die...
That in peace you may die!

Ah Nadir! I had hoped to find a way to free him
and save his life,
for sacred friendship's sake...
But you love him, you love him, you love him!
That one word has filled my soul with hate and
bitter rage!

Leïla
Oh gods, I am weak!
Gods!

Zurga
Trying to save his life you condemned him to
death.

Leïla
For pity's sake be kind!

Zurga
Your pleas will never soften...

Leïla
For pity's sake be kind!

Zurga
...my jealous heart!

Leïla
Jealous?

Zurga
He and I, Leïla, he and I both loved you!

Leïla
Ah!

Zurga
You thought that you could save him
but instead reawakened
all the fury and hatred
that was burning in my jealous heart.
You will lose him forever,
while I laugh here in pleasure
to see you die together today
and spend eternity in torment apart.

Leïla
My love for him becomes a crime that he must
die for.
Avenge yourself on me: let that be your reward.

Zurga
His crime was being loved when I had been
ignored.
You tried to have his life and condemned him
to death.

Leïla
How can you spill his blood?
I am the one who is guilty!

Zurga
You love him...

Leïla
 You are cruel!

Zurga
 You love him...

Leïla
 You are harsh!

Zurga
 Then he must die!

Leïla
 So be it!
 Laugh! Take your revenge!
 Come on, laugh, come on, laugh!
 Laugh when you see our torment,
 yes, enjoy your brief moment:
 laugh till endless remorse
 comes to tear your soul apart.
 You will lose us forever
 when we die for your pleasure:
 but in heaven together
 we shall live as one loving heart.
 Laugh at our torment! Laugh while you may!
 Laugh till remorse comes to tear your soul apart.
 Laugh, you monster, laugh, come on:
 then remorse will tear your soul apart.
 Ah! You monster!
 Laugh, come on! Zurga, I curse your name...
 curse your soul! For I love him evermore!

Zurga
 I tremble, blind with rage!
 I am eaten up with jealous fury.
 Listen! Ah!
 All hope is lost: now I take my vengeance,
 blind with rage and jealous fury...
 You will lose him forever!
 It is over: all hope is lost;
 and you will die with him.
 Yes, you both shall die.
 It is over... All hope is lost!
 Ah, no more! Ah, no more!

Chorus
 Ah! Great god!

No 14, Scene and Duo
Nourabad
 [16] Spirits of dreadful night,
 we shall destroy them who offend your sight.

Chorus
 Spirits of dreadful night,
 we shall destroy them who offend your sight.

Nadir
 Ah!

Leïla
 Nadir!

Nadir
 Leïla!

Leïla
 I shall be glad to die at last....

Nadir
 Come!

Leïla and Nadir
 Ah! I shall be glad to die beside my love.
 Sacred life of being!
 Embrace unseeing!
 Sacred life of being!
 The powers of darkness
 cannot make me fear the moment of death.
 Our god will protect us!
 Our god will accept us!
 Yes he will protect us!
 And I shall not tremble in your loving arms,
 yes, your arms at the hour of my final breath.

Nourabad and Chorus
 Look there! They defy us!

Nadir
 In the radiant heavens
 shines a purer light:
 we shall know that radiance,
 shall live in that light.

Leïla
 To the halls of splendour
 through an open door
 as one soul we enter,
 reunited evermore.

Chorus
 No ray of light relieves the gloom of darkest night.
 The light of dawn will fill the sky.

Leïla and Nadir
 Come on!
 We never shall be afraid!
 Ah! Sacred light of being!
 Embrace unseeing!
 Sacred light of being!
 The powers of darkness
 cannot make me fear the moment of death.
 Our god will protect us!
 And he will accept us!
 To the halls of splendour
 through heaven's open door ah!
 as one soul we enter,
 as one soul united for evermore.

Nadir
 Farewell, Leïla, farewell, farewell.

Leïla
 Farewell, Nadir, farewell, farewell.

Chorus
The light of dawn will fill the sky.

Bonus tracks

No 15, Trio (posthumous)

Leïla and Nadir

[17] Sacred light of being!
Mighty gods unseeing!
The threat has vanished;
our fears are banished:
for we have been saved from death at the last.

Zurga

Sacred light of being!
Mighty gods unseeing!
My tears have vanished:
I who saved them both can die at the last.

Leïla and Nadir

Zurga came to save us...
Life once more he gave us.
I shall not leave you:
ever in your loving arms I shall rest.

Zurga

O gods! See them together:
such love lasts forever.
My tears have vanished:
I die at the last.
Oh light of being!

Oh gods unseeing!
I can die at last.
Such love lasts forever!

Leïla

Mighty gods unseeing!

Nadir

In the radiant heavens
shines a purer light:
we fly to that radiance,
to that shining light.

Leïla

To the halls of splendour
through an open door
as one soul we enter,
reunited evermore.

Leïla and Nadir

Darkness enfolds the earth:
no dawn to light the sky.

Zurga

Darkness enfolds the earth:
dawn will soon light the sky.
Darkness enfolds us:
very soon dawn will light up the sky.

Leïla and Nadir

Come on! Our hearts united in love!
Sacred light of being!

Mighty gods unseeing!
The threat has vanished;
our fears are banished:
for we have been saved from death at the last.

Zurga

Oh gods! Such love lasts forever!
Sacred light of being!
Mighty gods unseeing!
My tears have vanished:
I who saved them both can die at the last!

Leïla and Nadir

I shall not leave you;
none shall tear me from you at the last!
Here in your arms I shall rest!

No 2b, Duet (posthumous ending)

Nadir

[18] Then from the holy shrine,
adorned with flowers and jewels,
like a phantom she rose,
the girl that haunts my soul.

Zurga

...like a phantom she rose,
the girl that haunts my soul.

Nadir

A hush descended round her;

people stared, full of wonder,
in the stillness they sighed:
Look there! Behold the goddess
who has come here among us
See her arms opened wide!

Zurga

She lifts her veil a moment...
Oh blessed sight! Oh rapture!
The people fall to the ground...

Nadir and Zurga

Yes, a goddess, truly a goddess
of such rare, radiant beauty!
Yes, a goddess, truly a goddess
sent among us on earth
for our delight and torment
who beside her have no worth.

Nadir

Slowly she moves among them,
still intent on her duty...

Zurga

...but already her veil conceals
her radiant beauty...

Nadir

And her face, alas, cannot be seen...

Zurga
She is gone!

Nadir
She is gone!
But like a stab of pain an unknown desire engulfs me!

Zurga
A raging fire overwhelms me!

Zurga and Nadir
Again it drives us apart!

Nadir
Both our hearts are filled with anger:
we are enemies once more!

Zurga
No, let nothing come between us!

Nadir
Nothing!

Nadir and Zurga
Our friendship shall never end!
I swear, our friendship shall never end!
Yes, a goddess, truly a goddess
who unites our two souls again;
I shall hold true to my promise
and as brothers we shall live as one.
A goddess, truly a goddess
who unites our two souls again!
Yes, we shall tread one single path,
faithful until the hour of death.

*Libretto by Eugène Cormon and Michel Carré,
English translation by David Parry,
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On session: Rebecca Evans



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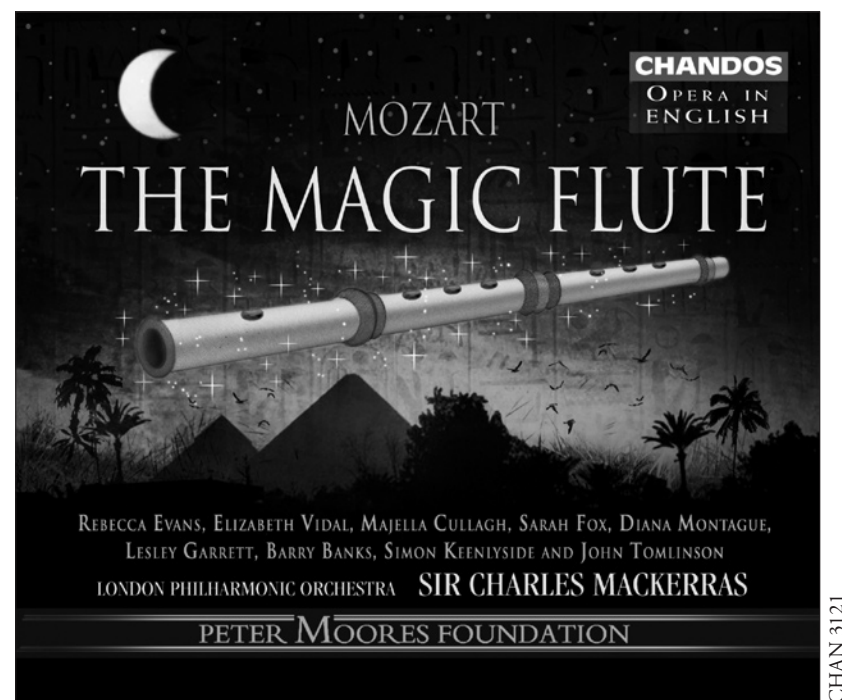


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BIZET: THE PEARL FISHERS HIGHLIGHTS - Soloists/LPO/Cohen

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highlights from
THE PEARL FISHERS

Published by Peters Edition Ltd, London

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Eugène Cormon and Michel Carré,
English translation by David Parry

Zurga, head fisherman
Nadir, fisherman
Leïla, priestess of Brahma
Nourabad, high priest of Brahma

Geoffrey Mitchell Choir
London Philharmonic Orchestra

Simon Keenlyside *baritone*
Barry Banks *tenor*
Rebecca Evans *soprano*
Alastair Miles *bass*

Brad Cohen

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