

## Wagner (1813-1883) Overture to *Rienzi*

*Rienzi, the last of the Tribunes*, is Wagner's third opera and one from which he enjoyed tremendous success- written between 1838 and 1840. The plot is about our hero, protecting the rights of the populace, urged on by the church- against the evil noble factions of mediaeval Rome. The populace –and church- finally turn against him as the opera ends. Politics of the day made subjects like this one, and the *Huguenots* and to some extent *La Juivre*, extremely popular. What is unlike Wagner's later music, is that *Rienzi* follows a format for French Grand Opera- with a tuneful overture, trios, duets, chorus scenes, and ballet. This caused the Wagnerite conductor, Hans von Bülow to joke by referring to *Rienzi* as Meyerbeer's best opera.

## Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

*O Carlo, ascolta* –from the opera *Don Carlos*. The opera got its first performance in Paris in 1867, and was not as successful as anticipated, until Verdi revised and shortened it considerably, removing one act and bringing it closer to Schiller's storyline. As opera plots go, it doesn't lack for anything. There is a Father-Wife-Son triangle that emerges, putting our hero in dangerous confrontation with power. We find him in this aria, in prison, as Rodrigo explains that he is the only one who can come to the aid of Flanders. In an unlikely irony, the story line follows true life. The real Don Carlos was affianced to Elizabeth of Valois in 1559 (when only fourteen) and that his father married her a few months later. Don Carlos later on aspired to be governor of Flanders, but the notorious Duke of Alva was sent in his stead, as Carlos was willful and going insane. Carlos was imprisoned on Philip's orders and died shortly thereafter- as did Elizabeth. We can't always blame librettists, with such fantastic raw material available.

O Carlo, ascolta,  
la madre t'aspetta  
a San Giusto doman;  
tutto ella sa...  
Ah! la terra mi manca... Carlo mio,  
a me porgi la man!...

Io morirò, ma lieto in core,  
che potei così serbar  
alla Spagna un salvatore!  
Ah! di me non ti scordar!  
Regnare tu dovevi,  
ed io morir per te.  
Ah! io morirò, ma lieto in core,  
che potei così serbar, etc.  
Ah! la terra mi manca...  
la mano a me... a me...  
Ah! salva la Fiandra...  
Carlo, addio! Ah! ah!...

O Carlos, listen:  
your mother awaits  
for you at San Giusto tomorrow;  
she knows it all...  
I die...o my Carlos,  
give me your hand!...

I will die glad in my heart  
for I have given Spain  
a saviour!  
Ah! don't forget me!  
You had to rule,  
And I had to die for you.  
Ah, I will die glad in my heart,  
for I have given etc.  
I'm dying...  
give me your hand... your hand...  
Ah! save Flanders...  
Farewell, Carlos!...Ah! ah!...

**Credo in un dio crudel- from the opera Otello.** This opera is something of a miracle in musical history. In 1871 *Aida* had been performed and Verdi, laden with honours, was considered to be retiring. There was a whole new swatch of younger talent nipping at his heels and in some ways, he was considered to be old fashioned. Then, fifteen years later, **Otello** roars on to the scene, a new opera in a new style- with Verdi in his seventy-fourth year. The composer Boito restricted himself to being a librettist and the two of them fashioned the great drama into one of the very best *Shakespearean* transfers to operatic form. This aria is from the beginning of the second act, where **Iago** shows his true colours to the audience in the famous “I believe in a cruel God!”

Credo in un Dio crudel  
 che m'ha creato simile a sè  
 e che nell'ira io nomo.  
 Dalla viltà d'un germe  
 o d'un atomo vile son nato.  
 Son scellerato perchè son uomo;  
 e sento il fango originario in me.  
 Sì! Questa è la mia fè!  
 Credo con fermo cuor,  
 siccome crede la vedovella al tempio,  
 che il mal ch'io penso  
 e che da me procede,  
 per il mio destino adempio.  
 Credo che il guisto  
 è un istrion beffardo,  
 e nel viso e nel cuor,  
 che tutto è in lui bugiardo:  
 lagrima, bacio, sguardo,  
 sacrificio ed onor.  
 E credo l'uom gioco  
 d'iniqua sorte  
 dal germe della culla  
 al verme dell'avel.  
 Vien dopo tanta irrision la Morte.  
 E poi? E poi?  
 La Morte è il Nulla.  
 È vecchia fola il Ciel!

I believe in a cruel God  
 who has created me in His image  
 and whom, in hate, I name.  
 From some vile seed  
 or base atom I am born.  
 I am evil because I am a man;  
 and I feel the primeval slime in me.  
 Yes! This is my testimony!  
 I believe with a firm heart,  
 as does the young widow at the altar,  
 that whatever evil I think  
 or that whatever comes from me  
 was decreed for me by fate.  
 I believe that the honest man  
 is but a poor actor,  
 both in face and heart,  
 that everything in him is a lie:  
 tears, kisses, looks,  
 sacrifices, and honor.  
 And I believe man to be the sport  
 of an unjust Fate,  
 from the germ of the cradle  
 to the worm of the grave.  
 After all this mockery comes death.  
 And then? And then?  
 Death is Nothingness.  
 Heaven is an old wives' tale!

### **Franz von Suppé (1819-1895)-**

**‘Dichter und Bauer’ – Overture ‘Poet and Peasant’.** Franz Suppé or Francesco Suppé-Demelli was of Belgian/Italian descent born in the Croatian outpost of the Austro-Hapsburg empire. His operettas, of which there are nearly four dozen, are a marvelous representation of light romantic entertainment. Tuneful, wonderfully scored and instantly accessible to listeners on

the first try, Suppé is the logical and necessary forerunner of Franz Lehár, both providing audiences with delightful vignettes that survive unscathed in pops repertoire all over the world. Some of the natural tunefulness of Suppé, may be attributed to the fact that he was a trained singer. **Poet and Peasant**, one of his earlier works got its premier at the *Theater an der Wien*, in 1846, a mere nineteen years after the death of Beethoven. It has remained a perennial favourite and is often performed at the modern eras New Year's Day Concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic.

### Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

***Il balen del suo sorriso*** – from the opera ***Il Trovatore***. It is not the story telling that makes this opera as popular as it has been over the years. It is clearly one of the most puzzling story lines that ever hit the stage. The magical music makes up for everything, and though most of the dramatic turns of the story occur, either before the opera starts, or in between acts, unseen by the audience, I'm inclined to agree with opera expert Henry W. Simon, when he writes: *"..because the music is so eloquent, one can always tell whether the characters are happy or sad, or full of love or full of hate. And everyone, in Il Trovatore is full of some strong emotion all the time."* This aria is the Count di Luna's profession of love for Leonora, who is also in love with Manrico, who doesn't know it, but is not only the mortal enemy of di Luna, but also by twist of fate his brother. This too, if one can believe it, is based on events that have historical record in fifteenth century Spain.

Ardita, e qual furente amore  
ed irritato orgoglio  
chiesero a me.  
Spento il rival, caduto  
ogni ostacol sembrava ai miei desiri;

novello e più possente ella  
ne appresta...  
L' altare! Ah, no, non fia  
D' altri Leonora!  
Leonora è mia!

Il balen del suo sorriso  
D' una stella vince il raggio!  
Il fungor del suo bel viso  
novo infonde in me coraggio!...  
Ah! l' amor, l' amor ond' ardo  
le favelli in mio favor!  
Sperda il sole d' un suo sguardo  
la tempesta del mio cor.  
Qual suono!...oh ciel...

(Daring, they asked me  
about maddening love  
and wounded pride.)  
My rival dead,  
when every hindrance seemed removed  
from the achievement of my wishes;  
she now lays out a new and a most  
difficult obstacle ...  
The altar! Oh no, let it not be  
Leonora be but mine!...  
Leonora is mine!

The flashing of her smile  
shines more than a star!  
The radiance of her beautiful features  
Gives me new courage!...  
Ah! Let the love that burns inside me  
speak to her in my favour!  
Let the sun's glance clear up  
the tempest raging in my heart.  
What a clamour!...oh heavens...

## Un Ballo in Maschera – A Masked Ball - Prelude to Act II

This is the only Verdi opera to have its plot take place in the United States. The reasons for this are a farfetched and disjointed. The original Scribe text wrote of the murder of King Gustavus III of Sweden- who was shot to death in 1792 at a Masked Ball and died 13 days later. But, by the time the opera came to be mounted there had just been an attempt on the life of Napoleon III and it was considered dangerous to give the Neopolitans some unhealthy inspirations. The censors decided that no one would be offended if the murdered character became the Governor of a quasi-colonial Boston and other sundry characters like Sam and Tom, followed suit. The music is vintage Verdi and we get a fine sampling of it, in the Prelude to Act II.

***Eri tu che macchiavi*** from Act III is the one aria that everyone knows. Renato is secretary and best friend to Riccardo, the Governor of Boston. Amelia is Renato's wife. Act III begins with the drama of Renato's return home with his wife Amelia. She has apparently betrayed him, with his best friend, and in the best traditions of grand opera there is only one thing the baritone can demand – the death of his wife. She tries to explain but to no avail in the recitative to this aria, accompanied by solo cello obbligato. When she has left, Renato sings *Eri tu che macchiavi* to a portrait of Riccardo that hangs on the wall – with sentiments of anger and ruin.

Alzati! Là tuo figlio A te concede riveder. Nell'ombra e nel silenzio, là Il tuo rossore e l'onta mia nascondi <i>Amelia goes out</i> Non è su lei, nel suo Fragile petto che colpir degg'io Altro, ben altro sangue A terger dèssi l'offesa <i>Staring at the portrait</i> Il sangue tuo! E lo trarrà il pugnale Dallo sleal tuo core Delle lacrime mie vendicator Vendicator, Vendicator	Rise! There I allow you To see your son again. In the darkness and in the silence, there, Hide your blushing and my shame <i>Amelia goes out</i> It is no upon her, in her Fragile bosom that I must strike Other, quite other blood Must cleanse the offense <i>Staring at the portrait</i> Your blood! And my dagger will draw it From your treacherous heart Of my tears the avenger, The avenger, the avenger!
Eri tu che macchiavi quell'anima La delizia dell'anima mia... Che m'affidi e d'un tratto esecrabile L'universo avveleni per me Avveleni per me! Traditor! Che compensi in tal guisa Dell'amico tuo primo la fè! O dolcezze perdute! O memorie D'un amplesso che l'essere india!	It was you who besmirched that soul The delight of my soul... You who trust me and suddenly loathsome Poison the universe for me Poison for me! Traitor! You who repay in such a fashion The loyalty of your best friend, O lost sweets; O memories Of an embrace that composed my being!

<p>Quando Amelia sì bella, sì candida Sul mio seno brillava d'amore Quando Amelia etc... E finita. Non siede che l'odio Non siede che l'odio Che l'odio e la morte nel vedovo cor! O dolcezze perdute! O speranze d'amor D'amor, d'amor!</p>	<p>When Amelia, so beautiful, so pure On my bosom glowed with love When Amelia, etc... It is finished. Only hatred dwells Only hatred dwells Only hatred and death in my bereaved heart! O lost sweets! O hopes of love, Of love, of love!</p>
--	--

### Giacomo Puccini – (1858-1924)

***Te Deum* from the opera *Tosca*.** *Tosca* is set in the city of Rome, one of the few operatic storylines that takes place in real historical time, within the afternoon, evening and early morning of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1800- in buildings that still stand to this day. The end of the first act is set in the church of Sant Andrea della Valle, where the evil baron Scarpia sings the *Te Deum* with church goers, feigning religious fervour and oozing evil from every pore. It is not a dissimilar moment to Iago's aria from *Otello*, where the juxtaposition of what should be clearly sacred is contorted in the hands of true evil. Before long, Cavaradossi will be delivered to the gallows and Floria Tosca into his arms. Audience members will no doubt remember Mr. Golesorkhi's fine realization of the role of baron Scarpia in NCPA's production of *Tosca*, in 2010.

<p>Tre sbirri... Presto - seguila dovunque vada... non visto... e provvedi!</p> <p><i>Spoletta</i> Basta. Il convescno</p> <p>Scarpia A Palazzo Farnese !</p> <p>Va, Tosca ! Nel tuo cuor s'annida Scarpia.</p> <p>E Scarpia che scioglie a volo il falco della tua gelosia.</p> <p>Quanta promessa nel tuo pronto sospetto! Nel tuo cuor.</p> <p>A doppia mira tendo il voler, ne il capo del ribelle e la piu preziosa.</p> <p>Ah di quegli occhi vittoriosi vedere la fiamma</p>	<p>Three agents, and a close carriage... Quickly... follow her wherever she may go... Be careful</p> <p><i>Spoletta</i> I will. Where shall I find you ?</p> <p>Scarpia At the Farnese Palace !</p> <p>Go, Tosca ! There is room in your heart for Scarpia ..</p> <p>Go, Tosca ! For Scarpia it is who has fired your soul and stirred up your jealous passion.</p> <p>Infinite promise lies in your hasty suspicions. There is room in your heart for Scarpia...</p> <p>Twofold the purpose now I entertain, and the hanging of that rebel is by no means my chief desire...</p> <p>'Tis in her gay, triumphant eyes that I hope soon to kindle love's languid flame,</p>
---	--

illanguidir con spasimo d'amore ! fra le mie braccia... il languidir d'amor L'uno al capestro, l'altra fra le mie braccia...  Tosca, mi fai dimenticare Iddio !  Te Aeternum Patrem Omnis Terra Veneratur!	when in my arms she is clasped, with fond rapture, giddy with amorous joy. One to the scaffold, and the other to my fond arms...  Tosca ! you make me renounce my hopes for Heaven  To You Eternal Father The Whole World Gives Glory and Praise!
--	---

### **Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)**

**Overture to *Semiramide*.** Rossini, who was to revolutionize Italian Opera, and by doing so influence all subsequent opera – leaves us very little information whilst he was actually at work on compositions. He wrote thirty-six operas, until he was the age of thirty six and then stopped composing almost altogether for the next thirty-six years. He took up again, at the very end, influencing the young Saint-Saens and a budding new generation. It is in the latter 30 year period that the anecdotal, exaggerated, larger than life, recipe giving, deliberately askew and largely fascinating version of Rossini is revealed, helped along by his mischievous personality. The opera *Semiramide*, or *Semiramis*, was a relatively early work, written in 1823 and was immediately successful. By 1824 it had played in London, and by 1845 in New York. The popular overture, as was usual for Rossini, was composed last, and is full of jaunty content from the main body of the opera.

### **Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)**

***Pieta, rispetto, amore – from the opera Macbeth.*** Shakespearean themes were dear to Verdi for most of his life. *Macbeth*, written in 1847, comes from an earlier prolific period in which Verdi wrote 14 operas. The opera was very unusual for its day, and instantly successful, more so than after its revision and translation to French for the Parisians. It fell into obscurity after 1865 but made a comeback after performances in 1938 and 1939. Verdi was convinced he was embarking on something great, cajoling and entreating with Piave the librettist to come up with something as powerful as the original Shakespeare. The storylines are fairly well matched. Where there is no lack of lustre is in the consummate way Verdi writes – and this aria is no exception. *Pieta, rispetto, amore...* is from Act IV, Scene 5 where Macbeth awaits the army that marches on him, as Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane.

Perfidi! All'anglo contro me v'unitel Le potenze presaghe han profetato: "Esser puoi sanguinario, feroce; Nessuno nato da donna ti nuoce".	Traitors! With the English you unite against me! Yet those who predict the future have prophesied "Be bloody, bold and resolute, For none of woman born shall harm you."
---	---

<p>No, non temo di voi, né del fanciullo  Che vi conduce! Raffermar sul trono  Questo assalto mi debbe,  O sbalzarmi per sempre... Eppur la vita  Sento nelle mie fibre inaridita!</p> <p>Pietà, rispetto, amore,  Conforto ai di cadenti,  Non spargeran d'un fiore  La tua canuta età.  Né sul tuo regio sasso  Sperar soavi accenti:  Sol la bestemmia, ah! lasso!  La nenia tua sarà!</p>	<p>No, I don't fear you  Nor the boy who leads you!  This attack will confirm me on my throne  Or overthrow me forever!  And yet...within my veins, I can feel my lifeblood  drying up.</p> <p>Honor, respect and love,  The comforts of one's declining years,  Will not offer any flowers  For me in my old age.  Nor even at my royal tomb  Might I hope for some kind words.  Only bitter curses, alas!  My requiem shall be.</p>
---	---

### Umberto Giordano (1867-1948)

**Nemico della Patria – from the opera Andrea Chenier.** Andrea Chenier is Giordano's fourth and best known opera, and perhaps the finest of the fourteen he wrote. Giordano came to our attention with his opera *Marina* which was introduced at the Sonzogno Publishers competition for one act operas in 1888. *Marina* took sixth place -the winner was Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*. The plot of *Andrea Chenier* could well have been taken from the real life antics of Chenier, and as it happens, mirrors the events of the French Revolution, the rise of Robespierre and the vicious condemnation of aristocratic life. There is, of course, a love interest that crosses the class barrier, and in the recriminating trials - before summary guillotining – the cast get to sing wonderfully written arias about their emotional state. Of these, the tenor aria *Improvviso*, and Gerard's aria *Nemico della Patria* are the most famous. Gerard, formerly the servant, now holds high office with the Revolutionary tribunal and is about to write a denunciation of his longtime friend and companion in arms, Chenier. *Nemico della Patria* – or Enemy of the Fatherland is incriminating enough to have Chenier put to death, despite Gerard's subsequent efforts to stop the wheels he himself has set in motion. On a historical note, the real Chenier was executed a mere three days before Robespierre himself, and had events reversed themselves, our hero may have been saved.

Nemico della Patria?!  
È vecchia fiaba che beatamente  
ancor la beve il popolo.  
Nato a Costantinopoli? Straniero!  
Studiò a Saint Cyr? Soldato!

An enemy of his country?  
An old fable that gladly  
the public still swallows.  
Born in Constantinople? A foreigner!  
Studied at Saint-Cyr? A soldier!

Traditore! Di Dumouriez un complice!  
E poeta? Sovvertitor di cuori  
e di costumi!  
n di m'era di gioia  
passar fra gli odi e le vendette,  
puro, innocente e forte.  
Gigante mi credea ...  
Son sempre un servo!  
Ho mutato padrone.  
Un servo obbediente di violenta passione!  
Ah, peggio! Uccido e tremo,  
e mentre uccido io piango!  
Io della Redentrica figlio,  
pel primo ho udito il grido suo  
pel mondo ed ho al suo il mio grido  
unito... Or smarrita ho la fede  
nel sognato destino?  
Com'era irradiato di gloria  
il mio cammino!  
La coscienza nei cuor  
ridestar delle genti,  
racogliere le lagrime  
dei vinti e sofferenti,  
fare del mondo un Pantheon,  
gli uomini in dii mutare  
e in un sol bacio,  
e in un sol bacio e abbraccio  
tutte le genti amar!

Traitor! Accomplice of Dumouriez!  
A poet? Corruptor of hearts  
and of traditions!  
Once I lived happily  
in the realm of hatred and vengeance,  
pure, innocent, and strong.  
A giant, I believed myself!  
I am still a servant...  
I've only changed masters...  
a slave to violent passions!  
Ah, worse! I kill and tremble,  
and while I kill, I weep.  
I, a son of the Revolution,  
first heard its cry  
and joined it with my own.  
Have I now lost faith  
in that dream?  
How illumined with glory  
was my path!  
The conscience of the heart  
to reawaken in men;  
gathering up the tears  
of the oppressed and suffering;  
making the world a paradise;  
transforming men into gods;  
and with a single kiss--  
and with a single kiss and embrace,  
to love all humanity!

### **Johann Strauss Jr. (1825-1899)**

**Egyptian March.** Johann Strauss wrote his 'Egyptian March' Opus 335 in Pavlovsk, near St. Petersburg and played it for the first time there in a concert on July 6, 1869. The piece is dedicated to the Grand Duke Friedrich of Baden, and Strauss got a medal for it. On December 26, of the same year the march was played in the Theater an der Wien as an *entr'acte* before the last scene of a burlesque called 'Nach Egyptian' by J. Bittner. Its subsequent performances in Vienna have been fêted and regular, since 1870 when it was one of the first pieces performed in the new building of the Musikverein. The Trio section of the march calls for the orchestra to sing the main melody, and has further endeared this piece to the general public.

## Popular Songs

*L'ultima Canzone* and *Non ti scordar di me* by Tosti and de Curtis respectively, have long been favourites of the tenor repertoire and provide a wonderful close to our vocal festivities. Between 1900 and 1930 Ernesto de Curtis wrote over 100 songs, including the famous "Torna a Surriento". Francesco Tosti in contrast, was a great figure of the belle epoch in London, knighted by the crown and delivering his elegant songs to drawing room society. Transposed tonight as necessary for baritone voice, these popular melodies have bewitched audiences for generations, have been taken up by several great and famous voices, and also found their way into Hollywood films.

### **L'ultima canzone – The Last Song – by Francesco Paolo Tosti**

M'han detto che domani  
Nina vi fate sposa,  
Ed io vi canto ancor la serenata.  
Là nei deserti piani  
Là,ne la valle ombrosa,  
Oh quante volte a voi l'ho ricantata!

Foglia di rosa  
O fiore d'amaranto  
Se ti fai sposa  
Io ti sto sempre accanto.

Domani avrete intorno  
Feste sorrisi e fiori  
Nè penserete ai nostri vecchi amori.  
Ma sempre notte e giorno  
Piena di passione  
Verrà gemendo a voi la mia canzone.

Foglia di menta  
O fiore di granato,  
Nina, rammenta  
I baci che t'ho dato!

Ah! ... Ah! ...

They told me that tomorrow  
Nina, you will be a bride.  
yet still I sing my serenade to you!  
Up on the barren plateau,  
down in the shady valley,  
Oh, how often I have sung it to you!

Rose-petal  
O flower of amaranth,  
though you marry,  
I shall be always near.

Tomorrow you'll be surrounded  
by celebration, smiles and flowers,  
and will not spare a thought for our past love;  
yet always, by day and by night,  
with passionate moan  
my song will sigh to you.

Mint-flower,  
O flower of pomegranate,  
Nina, remember  
the kisses I gave you!

Ah! ... Ah! ...

**Non ti scordar di me – Don't forget about me – by Ernesto de Curtis -**

Partirono le rondini dal mio paese freddo e senza sole, cercando primavera di viole, nidi d'amore e di felicità	The swallows left From my cold and sunless country, Searching for Springs full of violets And lovely and happy nests.
La mia piccola rondine partì senza lasciarmi un bacio senza un addio partì	My little swallow left Without leaving me a kiss She left without a goodbye
Non ti scordar di me; la vita mia legata e a te io t' amo sempre più nel sogno mio rimani tu	Don't forget about me: My life is tied to you I love you more and more In my dream you stay
Non ti scordar di me la vita mia legata e a te c'è sempre un nido nel mio cuor per te	Don't forget about me My life is tied to you There's always a nest In my heart for you
Non ti scordar di me!	Don't forget about me
Non ti scordar di me!	Don't forget about me

**Emperor Waltz.** For the inauguration of the new concert hall 'Konigsbau' in the autumn of 1889, Johann Strauss was in Berlin, putting on a series of concerts in which his works were to be included. There was a hundred-man orchestra for the occasion and the concert on 21 October included this new waltz which had been promised for the opening ceremonies. It had been announced with the title 'Hand in Hand', alluding to the pact between Austria and Germany which the two emperors, Franz Joseph I and Wilhelm II had endorsed in August that year. The name was changed to *Kaiser Waltz*, before the first performance and performed under that name ever since. It is also a perennial favourite of the Viennese repertoire and immensely popular the world over. Strauss' friend Johannes Brahms put him in touch with Simrock the publishing house, and this waltz was the first published article of their collaboration.