

Saturdee Opry Links Caprice Edition/ Rip Rense

Saturdee Opry Links' Caprice Edition is now posted for your edification, delight, intellectual prodding, and fun. Ten selections and overture, all absorbing, riveting, rewarding. It's a superb edition, one sure to inspire even more of you to ignore these magnificent offerings than ever before! And just for that, here is my poem of some years back, "Ignore." How 'bout that!

IGNORE

Do ants ignore?
And do they snore?
Trailing in and out of particulate ant reality
Pushing sandgrain boulders aside
Do they know that they know only what they need to know?
No.
People, though, are blessed with peepholes
Through which they can see
Alternative reality
To shade and color their thoughts
With pointillist light
Rembrandt realism
Mondrian steelism
So why do they ignore
(And they do snore)
Trailing in and out of particulate people reality
Pushing the sandgrain world aside
Pushing the peepholes aside
Content to burrow inside anthills
And closet in caves
Of no thought or art
No daub, no sweep, no dab
Of synaptic brush
And scarcely a blush
What compels
A marvel to be unmarvelous
A miracle to be unmiraculous
A thinker to be unthinking
The ants have an excuse
Survivability is their be
But what of we?

----Copywrong Rip Rense, all blights preserved, may not be reproduced without ripe persimmons of the awful.

Saturdee Opry Links Overture.

"L'Isola Disabitata," by Haydn.

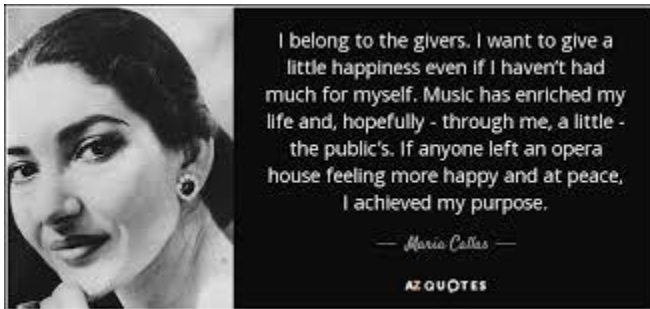
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUvn4GMpvtE>



Franco Fagioli



Luigi Alva



Callas



Elly Ameling



Lisette Oropesa

1.

Haydn's "l'isola Disabitata" concerns pirates, shipwreck, lengthy isolation, and, believe it or not, a happy ending. Here is Patricia Petibon with "Fra un dolce deliro," or "In a sweet delirium," presumably sung by the character, Silvia (see synopsis.) Prior to the happy ending, one must conclude.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98v2CwkDPCs>

Synopsis:

Gernando, his wife Costanza, and her much younger sister Silvia, are shipwrecked while traveling in the tropics. Pirates attack, and Gernando and the other survivors are abducted, leaving Silvia to be brought up alone on the island by Costanza. Costanza thinks they were abandoned by her husband, and is outraged, heartbroken. Thirteen years pass, and Silvia grows up unfettered by human companionship other than Ma, completely happy. One day, she sees two men rowing ashore from a ship. It is, of course, Gernando, who is seeking his wife's grave. One Enrico, who owes his life to Gernando, is with him. There is no grave to be found, of course, and Gernando is grief-stricken, proclaiming that he wants to die. Enrico arranges for sailors to abduct Gernando again to get him away from the island---but Costanza appears, and Enrico is able to convince her of her husband's fidelity through the years. Husband and wife are reunited, and Silvia realizes that Enrico is rather different from the cruel men she had been led to believe were the norm, by her mother.

Translation:

Italiano:

*Fra un dolce deliro
Son lieto e sospiro
Quel volto me piace,
Ma pace non ò,
Di belle speranze
Ò pieno il pensiero
E pur quel ch'io spero
Conoscer non' so.*

ENGLISH:

*In a sweet delirium
I am happy and sigh.
I do like that face,
but I have no peace.
My thoughts are filled
with beautiful hopes
and even what I hope I know,
I do not know.*

2.

Here is a lovely tenor aria from Haydn's "L'isola Disabitata," as sung by the Peruvian Luigi Alva, still with us at 97! This is "Non Turbar," or "Do not worry," presumably sung by the character, Gernando, expressing his grief over his lost wife. Unbeknownst to him, wifey-poo, Costanza ("Constant") has been marooned with their daughter on an island for many years. . .The astoundingly prolific and influential Haydn, of course, wrote 106 symphonies---but also 21 operas. This 1779 work uses an old libretto by

Pietro Metastasio (a premier exponent of the genre at the time), somewhat updated. The opera is marked by a "Sturm und Drang-" style G minor overture (see today's SOL overture), seven arias and a terrific final quartet (all influenced by Gluck's landmark work, "Orfeo," if you're keeping score at home.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6l20fx0tbsU>

Translation:

Italiano:

*Non turbar quand io mi lagno,
Caro amico, il mio cordoglio,
Io non voglio altro compagno
Che il mio barbaro
Dolor quel conforto
On questo arena
Un amico a me saria!
Ah la mia nella sua pena,
Renderebbe si maggior.*

ENGLISH:

*Do not worry when I cry,
my dear friend, my sorrow,
I do not want any other companion
than my barbaric pain
That comforts me in this arena,
it will be a friend to me!
Ah, my own pain
renders itself greatest.*

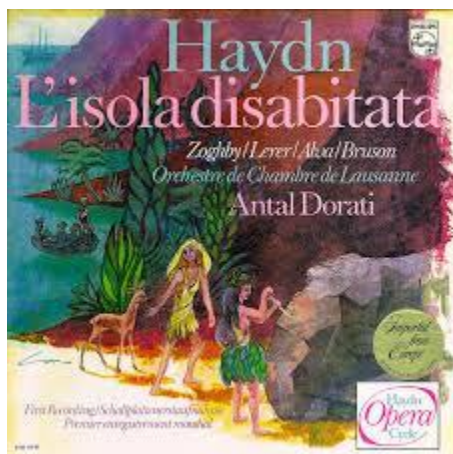
About "Sturm und Drang" ("storm and stress") a pre-romantic era movement in literature:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sturm_und_Drang

About Luigi Alva:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luigi_Alva

3.



If there seems to be a dearth of happy endings in life, at least there are some to be found in literature and opera. Yes, really, opera. It is not all broken-hearted tenors, brooding baritones, sobbing clowns, unrequited love, and dying sopranos. Haydn's "L'isola Disabitata," a story of pirates, kidnapping,

prolonged isolation, resentment. . .ends happily! Here is the wonderful conclusion to the opera, a vigorous, joyous (for the time) quartet that also prominently features the first violin, cello, flute and bassoon. (Yes, bassoon!) Pardon the banal allusion, but this was the rock 'n' roll of the (pre-romantic) era. Here is "Sono Contento Appieno," or "I am fully content." You know, just like SOL.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChDF3KwO1nk>

Translation:

(go here and search for "Sono contento appieno.")

<https://booklets.idagio.com/827949027567.pdf>

All about this opera:

<https://booklets.idagio.com/827949027567.pdf>

4.



Maria Callas, for all her triumphs, had one of the saddest endings in opera history. Her relatively early vocal decline and final years of seclusion, before her heart failed at age 53 in 1977, have long been a mystery---variously ascribed to her early massive weight loss, her devastation over the loss of a baby shortly after birth, her rejection by the cad, Aristotle OnASSis, her smoking. . .Now comes the truth. It turns out that the poor woman was long afflicted by a wasting disease called dermatomyositis, which gradually destroys function of muscles and ligaments---including the larynx. (Diagnosed by an Italian physician in 1975, who revealed this in 2002.) Worse, the steroids and immunosuppressants used to treat the disease often damage heart function. This would explain the erosion of her breath support in the early '60's, as well as the weakening of the top half of her voice---even a change in her posture. There are theories that her loss of nearly 100 pounds in the mid-50's might have contributed to susceptibility to the disease. But let us turn to her last triumph, her "happy ending," which came when no one was expecting it, at the Met in 1965. It was well-known that she had substantially lost her vocal glory, with indications as early as 1959, and after seeing her in a 1962 La Scala performance of Medea (where she was nearly booed), Met CEO Rudolph Bing privately declared that she was "vocally finished." So how was she able to muster one last moment of greatness, three years later, in a now legendary performance of Puccini's "Tosca," with Tito Gobbi? Who knows? Met on-air host Ira Siff (who was in attendance) called it "the most thrilling performance I have seen in my 62 years of operagoing. . .Callas

and Gobbi gave us the feeling we were observing real events channeled through an opera." Here is the astounding sound of the crowd upon Callas's mere stage entrance:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PGwfk0As4k>

And here is her "Vissi d'arte" from that same performance, March 25, 1965.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltKHnuHOrOs>

Synopsis:

The singer, Floria Tosca, has just been extorted by the fiend police chief, Scarpia, into a sexual liaison in exchange for the freedom of her lover, Cavaradossi. She sings to God, asking why she has been so cruelly inflicted with suffering, injustice, since she "never harmed a living soul" and "lived for art."

Translation:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vissi_d%27arte

5.



Painting by Stanley Gordon

Speaking again of happy endings in opera, the finale of Beethoven's problematic (revised many times by the composer) opera, "Fidelio," has nothing problematic about it---it is unambiguously triumphant, as only Beethoven can be. Feel the joy as they sing, "Oh God, what a moment this is!" Much as SOL repeats to himself every time a bird sings.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLRMTD3eY5w>

Synopsis:

In eighteenth-century Spain, Leonore's husband Florestan has been arrested and imprisoned by his villainous noble rival Don Pizarro, for attempting to expose the latter's crimes. Determined to rescue him, Leonore disguises herself as a boy, Fidelio, and takes a job at the prison where he is being held. In the end, Leonore (Fidelio) succeeds in freeing Florestan (it's a long story.) In the final scene, in the prison courtyard, Don Fernando, minister of state, proclaims justice for all. He is amazed when Rocco the jailer brings his friend Florestan before him and relates the details of Leonore's heroism. Pizarro is arrested, and Leonore herself removes Florestan's chains. The other prisoners too are freed, and the crowd hails Leonore.

This is "O Gott! Welch ein Augenblick," or "Oh, Lord, what a moment this is!" Here are tenor René Kollo and soprano Gundula Janowitz from a Vienna Opera production of long ago.

Translation:

Translation:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=343>

More translation:

LEONORA

Oh Lord! - What a moment this!

FLORESTAN

Oh unspeakable happiness!

FERNANDO

Just, oh Lord, your judgement is.

MARZELLINA, ROCCO

You try us, you desert us not.

ALL

Oh Lord! - What a moment this!

Oh unspeakable happiness!

Just, oh Lord, your judgement is,

You try us, you desert us not.

CHORUS

Who calls a faithful wife, his own,

Join in our song of joy!

Never be it praised too highly

Your husband's saviour to become.

FLORESTAN

My life your faithfulness has saved,

Virtue makes the villain fear.

LEONORA

Love alone my efforts guided,

Real love is not afraid.

CHORUS

Praise with greatest joy and warmth

Leonora's noble mind.

FLORESTAN

Who calls such, a wife his own,

Join in our song of joy!

Never be it praised too highly

The husband's saviour to become.,

LEONORA

*Love alone has given me
To liberate you from your chains.
Lovingly I sing with joy:
Florestan is mine again!*

CHORUS

*Who calls a faithful wife his own,
Join in our song of joy!
Never be it praised too highly
Your husband's saviour to become.*

LEONORA

*Lovingly I sing with joy:
Florestan is mine again!*

ALL

*Never be it praised too highly
Your husband's saviour to become.*

6.



Elsa Vera, an early Micaela

Saturdee Opry Links' Caprice Edition continues with an opera with a distinctly unhappy ending. For those bothered by the sad fate of Carmen, well, considering she worked in a cigarette factory, she might not have lived long, anyhow. Still, to be knocked off by her jealous, possessive former lover, Don Jose, hits too close to home for SOL, given the hypertrophic insanity and violence pervasive in today's so-called popular culture. So let us turn instead to the character, Micaela, from the same Bizet opera. This is a dear young girl of fealty and honor, deeply in love with Don Jose, despite his obsession with her friend,

Carmen. At the end of act three, Micaela confronts Jose and nobly but futilely pleads with him to visit his dying mother. Prior to that, she had searched for him in vain, at one point wandering into the mountains until lost, cold, and frightened. This leads to what, to many, is the greatest aria in the opera, "Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante," or "I say that nothing can frighten me." It is tender, fretful, and courageous, the latter quality explaining why it is usually sung as a moment of strength for the character. The soprano, Elly Ameling (still with us at 91!), apparently thought differently. Instead, she sang it as simply the utterance of a frightened, kind-hearted young woman trying to psyche herself into bravery. Here is Ameling's interpretation, followed by an equally excellent, but more conventional interpretation, by Angela Gheorghiu. Can you hear the difference? (Note, Ameling's comments play over the introduction.)

Ameling:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDww3BXmY7Y>

Gheorghiu:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9Dnu5NaFmM>

Translation:

https://www.aria-database.com/translations/carmen04_jedis.txt?

About Ameling:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elly_Ameling

7.

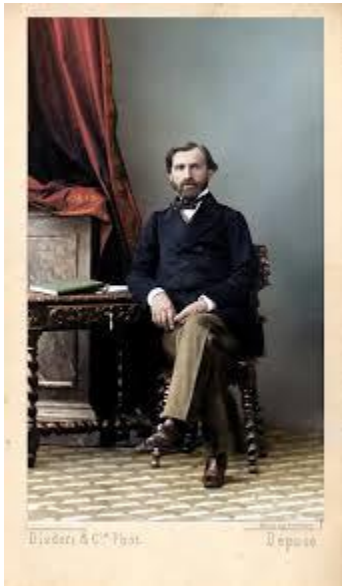


Papageno

Is there a more exuberant, satisfying, giddy ending to an opera than that to be found in Mozart's "The Magic Flute?" I mean, talk about *all's well that ends well*: the delightful Papageno, believing that love has forsaken him, is saved from suicide-by-hanging, then takes up with his sweetheart, Papagena. .the Queen of Hell and attendant hellions attack the great temple of Sarastro, only to be promptly repelled. . Sarastro then blesses the principal characters of the story, Pamina and Tamino, and all join in hailing the triumph of courage, virtue, wisdom, and general hey-hey. Well, hear, hear. At least it happens in opera, eh? Here is a Met production of the whole opera. Start at 2:35:00 and watch to the end. You'll feel better. You might even put the thing on right from the start. . .

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Om_qtZ-Hm7k

8.



Verdi

Verdi's massive, five-act 1855 opera, "Les Vepres Siciliennes" ("Sicilian Vespers") has an ending that is both deliriously happy and and utterly disastrous. How's that for a mixed message? Well, it's just like life, isn't it? Here is the background---repeat, background---to the story, before the opera even begins: Procida, a leading Sicilian patriot, was wounded by French troops during their invasion of Sicily, and was forced into exile. Montfort, leader of the French troops, raped a Sicilian woman who later gave birth to a son, Henri. Montfort later became governor of Sicily, while the Sicilian woman brought up her son to hate him, without revealing to Henri that Montfort was his father.

That's what you have to know before immersion into about four hours and five acts of intrigue and betrayal and irony and duplicity and injustice and other good operatic stuff. Meanwhile, in the last act. .

The Austrian Duchess, Helene, is preparing to marry Henri, whom she loves. However, and this is a big however, Procida (remember him?), has plotted to take Sicily back---and the signal for the overthrow and massacre of the Montfort regime is. . .the marriage of Helene and Henry! (With me?) So Helene, on the one hand, is filled with joy at the prospect of finally marrying Henri. On the other, she is aghast to realize that this will be used as part of a bloody plot. In the end, she tells Henri that they cannot be married. But. . .Montfort arrives, takes the couple's hands, joins them together, and pronounces them man and wife as the bells begin to ring. This, of course, is the signal for the Sicilians to rush in and hurl themselves upon Montfort and the French. Talk about your tainted "happily ever after." I mean, paging Shakespeare! So. . .

Here is the aria Helene sings with unabashed joy at the prospect of her marriage, "Merci, jeunes amies" (Verdi wrote to a French libretto). It's a terrific melody, here dispatched by the buoyant, shimmering voice of one of today's great sopranos, Lisette Oropesa.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8POk1BiGqs>

And here is how it can look on stage. . .with Rachel Willis-Sørensen (I suggest starting around 2:26:30.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1bNndJf_5o

Translation:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=527>

9.



Porpora

Well, I said it's the Caprice Edition, but it kept veering into operatic endings. So to prevent that from totally dominating, here is something out of left-field. Ever hear of the composer, Nicola Porpora? No, SOL hasn't, either. He was a prominent and highly successful musician, composer, teacher in the baroque period. Haydn was one of his pupils, exclamation point, as well as the famous castrati singers of the day, Farinelli and Caffarelli. Balls, you say! No, true. Among his approximately four dozen operas is "Polifemo," a three-act affair based on a combination of two mythological stories involving the cyclops, Polyphemus: his killing of Acis, and his blinding by Ulysses. In act five, there is an aria, or at least a solo turn, entitled "Alto Giove." The scene: a rock opens and a stream springs forth. Aci, the god of the stream, holds an urn. Both Aci and Galatea thank Jove for restoring his life ("Alto Giove").

If you want to investigate the Byzantine story further:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polifemo_\(opera\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polifemo_(opera))

Now, why did SOL choose "Alto Giove?" Simply because it popped up on a FB opera page, and seemed interesting, that's all. But. . . it's quite compelling for the mood cast. When you're listening, you find it redolent with that baroque era *umami*, if I may use that term, of many a sorrowful, despairing melody. (Whether such melodies mean to impart sorrow or despair is another matter.) Yet it is compounded by the allure of the mezzo-soprano singing it, so lush and rich is her voice---oh, wait! It isn't a mezzo! It's a counter-tenor---which is a man who sings like a mezzo, or soprano (or, to be historically accurate, a castrato.) Balls, you say! Well, presumably. This is the unfortunately named premier counter-tenor of our time, Franco Fagioli, of Argentina. No, SOL doesn't quite warm up to counter-tenors, either---they're so freaky! But this is a great, great voice, by any measure.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7GaJ8YWmkQ>

ANNNNND. . . for contrast, here is the same aria sung without a hint of testicularity, by the great Cecelia Bartoli. "Quien Es Mas Macho?"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8WC8y4qMIM>

Translation:

Italiano:

Alto Giove

è tua grazia, è tuo vanto,

il gran dono di vita immortale,

che il tuo cenno sovrano mi fà.

Ma il rendermi poi quella

già sospirata tanto

Diva amorose e bella,

è un dono senza uguale

come la tua beltà.

English:

High Jupiter

it is your grace,

it is your pride,

the great gift of immortal life,

that your sovereign nod gives me.

But then making me that

already longed for so much

Loving and beautiful diva,

it is a gift without equal

like your beauty.

About Fagioli:

<https://www.countertenorcorner.com/franco-fagioli.html>

About Porpora:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicola_Porpora

FINAL BOW:

Back to a regular tenor, our SOL Singer of the Week, the great Peruvian Mozart/Rossini/Donizetti exponent, Luis Ernesto Alva y Talledo---better known as Luigi Alva. (Please see post # 2.) Here is his elastic, radiant voice with a caressing rendering of "Un'aura amorosa," the paeon to no pain, AKA love, from Mozart's "Cosi Fan Tutte."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0tnN284YCo>

Translation:

FERRANDO

Un'aura amorosa

Del nostro tesoro

Un dolce ristoro

Al cor porgerà;

Al cor che, nudrito

Da speme, da amore,

Di un'esca migliore

Bisogno non ha.

ENGLISH:

A breath of love

From our treasures

Will afford our hearts

Sweet sustenance.

*A heart nourished
On the hope of love
Has no need*

Of greater inducement.

ANNNNND. . . HERE is the full "La Mia Dorabella" sequence from the same opera, act one scene one, with Alva, and greats Walter Berry and Hermann Prey! You know the scene:

In a cafe, Ferrando and Guglielmo (two officers) express certainty that their fiancées (Dorabella and Fiordiligi, respectively) will be eternally faithful. Don Alfonso expresses skepticism and claims that there is no such thing as a faithful woman (dogs presumably excepted.) He lays a wager with the two officers, claiming he can prove in a day's time that those two, like all women, are fickle. The wager is accepted: the two officers will pretend to have been called off to war; soon thereafter they will return in disguise and each attempt to seduce the other's lover.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjYRDCx8M_E

Translation:

Start at the top. . .

https://www.murashev.com/opera/Cos%C3%AC_fan_tutte,_ossia_La_scuola_degli_amanti_libretto_English_Act_1?

About Mr. Alva, including an audio profile:

<https://historyofthetenor.com/luigi-alva/>

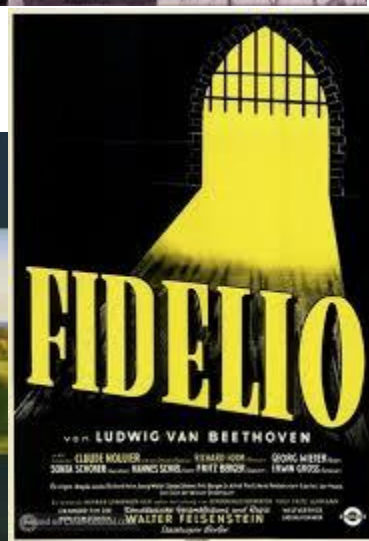
And:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luigi_Alva

About this nutty Mozart opera:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cos%C3%AC_fan_tutte





Carmen

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IL TRAGICO AMORE DI FLORIA TOSCA E MARIO CAVARADOSSI
COMMENTATO DALLE IMMORTALI MELODIE DI G. PUCCINI

IMPERIO ARGENTINA
ROSSANO BRAZZI
MICHEL SIMON



TOSCA

REGIA: CARLO KOCH