

Saturdee Opry Links Courage Edition 11-3-24/ Rip Rense

Saturdee Opry Links' Coraggio Edition, in view of the pending election, is now posted for your ambivalence. Overture and ten selections all exemplifying different types of courage, to comfort and inspire. (Still available on Sundee----one hour earlier!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEEyjiTW-I>

Saturdee Opry Links Overture

"Rienzi," by Wagner.

This is a tale of a long lost ancestor of mine who courageously stood up against tyranny.

<https://youtu.be/rPocVpMieP4?si=2bC8J1hFPdHdQX353>



Rienzi



Floria Tosca



Marie Duplessis, the model for "La Traviata"



Andrea Chenier

1.

SOL's first selection is one of righteous indignation---the fearless declaration of the poet, Andrea Chenier, as he led to the guillotine during the French Revolution for "crimes against the state." Much as will happen here if Trump is elected. The real Chénier (1762–1794) was a French poet of Greek and French origin, whose impassioned work was a precursor to the Romantic movement in art. Verismo composer Umberto Giordano and the great librettist, Luigi Illica, turned Chenier's life into an epic opera; a musical refutation of tyranny, in 1896. Defiant of the aristocracy to the end, Chenier goes- (how else?) poetically to his death. Here is that moment, "Come un bel di di maggio," or "Like a beautiful day in May," at the opera's end, sung here spectacularly by Franco Corelli. (Leopold Stokowski conducting.) Dig that note at 4:12 or so.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2heFphvGEQw>

Translation:

http://www.jussibjorlingsallskapet.com/uploads/file/Lyrics_song_arias/Lyrics_Come_un_bel_di.pdf

SOL EXTRA!

Who was Chenier?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Ch%C3%A9nier

2.



Well, how about a few opera arias of courage this week, eh, folks? For obvious reasons, I would think. Given the inevitable terrible trouble looming, whether Democrats win or lunatics and cretins prevail, SOL thought we could use some hard-bitten resolve. From Gounod's epic treatment of "Romeo and Juliet," here is Juliet's speech of fortification---to herself---"Amour, ranime mon courage," or "Love, revive my courage!" The soprano is Diana Damrau.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5Mhlqr1K5Y>

Synopsis:

Roméo and Juliette are together and, after a long duet, Roméo departs for exile. Juliette's father comes to remind her of Tybalt's dying wish for Juliette to marry Count Pâris. The friar, however, gives Juliette a draught which will cause her to sleep, so as to appear as if dead and, after being laid in the family tomb,

it is planned that Roméo will awaken her and take her away. We all know what happens after that, I'm afraid.

Translation:

*Amour, ranime mon courage,
Et de mon cœur chasse l'effroi!
Hésiter, c'est te faire outrage,
Trembler est un manque de foi!
Verse! verse! Verse toi-même ce breuvage!
Ah! Verse ce breuvage!
Ô Roméo! je bois à toi!
Mais si demain pourtant dans ces caveaux funèbres
Je m'éveillais avant son retour? Dieu puissant!
Cette pensée horrible a glacé tout mon sang!
Que deviendrai-je en cas ténèbres
Dans ce séjour de mort et de gémissements,
Que les siècles passés ont rempli d'ossements?
Où Tybalt, tout saignant encor de sa blessure,
Près de moi, dans la nuit obscure
Dormira! Dieu!!! ma main rencontrera sa main!
Quelle est cette ombre à la mort échappée?
C'est Tybalt! il m'appelle! il veut de mon chemin
Écarter mon époux! et sa fatale épée
Non! fantômes! disparaissent!
Dissipe-toi, funeste rêve!
Que l'aube du bonheur se lève
Sur l'ombre des tourments passés!
Viens! Amour! ranime mon courage, etc.*

ENGLISH:

*Love, revive my courage,
And chase away fear from my heart!
To hesitate is to insult yourself,
Trembling is a lack of faith!
Pour! pour! Pour this drink yourself!
Ah! Pour this drink!
O Romeo! I drink to you!
But if tomorrow nevertheless in these funeral vaults
I woke up before his return? Mighty God!
This horrible thought made all my blood run cold!
What will become of me in case of darkness
In this abode of death and groans,
That past centuries have filled with bones?
Where Tybalt, still bleeding from his wound,
Near me, in the dark night
Will sleep! God!!! my hand will meet his hand!*

*What is this shadow of escaped death?
It's Tybalt! he's calling me! he wants my way
Get rid of my husband! and his fatal sword
No! ghosts! disappear!
Dissipate, fatal dream!
Let the dawn of happiness break
On the shadow of past torments!
Come! Love! revive my courage, etc.*

3.



Micaela

In Bizet's "Carmen," there is the secondary character, Micaela, who is really the foil for "Carmen." The former is innocent, pure, and the latter capricious, devilish, given to impetuosity, wild passions. Both vie for the affection of Don Jose, a soldier---or rather, Jose and Micaela are headed for marriage until the Don gets a load of Carmen. Then it's Mr. Toad's Wild Ride to hell, ruin, and death for the pair of them. Throughout the opera, Micaela valiantly tries to warn Jose of the perils of consorting with the gypsy man-killer, to no avail. At one point, the poor young girl is lost in the woods as she tries to make her way to his encampment to warn him about Carmen. She sings, "I say that nothing frightens me" by way of putting on a brave face. This is "Je dis que rien ne m'épouvant," as sung here by Victoria de los Angeles. Listen to the welling cello accompaniment that comes and goes, underpinning and embellishing her anguish.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sX4k1dgMXk>

Translation:

MICAËLA

*Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante,
Je dis hélas que je répons de moi,*

*Mais j'ai beau faire la vaillante,
Au fond du cour, je meurs d'effroi
Seule, en ce lieu sauvage
Toute seule, j'ai peur,
Mais j'ai tort d'avoir peur,
Vous me donnerez du courage,
Vous me protégerez, Seigneur .
Je vais voir de près cette femme
Dont les artifices maudits
Ont fini par faire un infâme
De celui que j'aimais jadis;
Elle est dangereuse, elle est belle,
Mais je ne veux pas avoir peur,
Non, non je ne veux pas avoir peur!
Je parlerai haut devant elle,
Ah! Seigneur ... Vous me protégerez.
Ah! Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante, etc.
Protégez-moi! O Seigneur!
Donnez-moi du courage!
Protégez-moi! O Seigneur!
Protégez-moi! Seigneur!*

ENGLISH:

MICAËLA

*I say that nothing scares me,
I say unfortunately that I answer for myself,
But no matter how brave I act,
Deep down, I'm dying of fear
Alone, in this wild place
All alone, I'm afraid,
But I'm wrong to be afraid,
You will give me courage,
You will protect me, Lord.
I'm going to see this woman up close
Whose cursed artifices
Ended up doing something infamous
Of the one I once loved;
She is dangerous, she is beautiful,
But I don't want to be afraid,
No, no I don't want to be afraid!
I will speak loudly before her,
Ah! Lord... You will protect me.
Ah! I say that nothing scares me, etc.
Protect me! O Lord!
Give me courage!*

Protect me! O Lord!

Protect me! Lord!

ANNNNND. . .how it can look on stage. . .with Angela Gheorghiu:

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

4.

A prayer for our time, perhaps, may be found in the prayer of Rienzi, in Wagner's early opera of the same name, especially in this passage:

*O God, do not destroy the work,
that stands built for you at a price!
Oh, release, Lord, the deep night,
that still covers people's souls!*

The plot of the opera---based on the life of Cola di Rienzo in 14th century Rome---ultimately brings to mind a phrase of my father's: "God save us from the people." (A sentiment that is at the center of the current struggle in this country, where half the population is gripped with insanity, hatred and ignorance, not necessarily in that order.) That is: Rienzi is a late medieval Italian populist figure who succeeds in outwitting and then defeating the noble class, and raising the power of the people. Magnanimous at first, Rienzi is forced by events to crush the nobles' rebellion against the people's power, but popular opinion changes and ultimately, even the Church, which had urged him to assert himself, turns against him. In the end, the populace burns the capitol, where Rienzi and a few adherents have made a last stand. Here is the courageous plea for God's help, "Allmächt'ger Vater," or "Almighty Father," as sung by the James King.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uY8FnSzMYII>

Translation:

*Allmächt'ger Vater, blick herab!
Hör mich im Staube zu dir flehn!
Die Macht, die mir dein Wunder gab,
laß jetzt noch nicht zugrunde gehn!
Du stärktest mich, du gabst mir hohe Kraft,
du liehest mir erhabne Eigenschaft:
zu hellen den, der niedrig denkt,
zu heben, was im Staub versenkt.
Du wandeltest des Volkes Schmach
zu Hoheit, Glanz und Majestät!
O Gott, vernichte nicht das Werk,
das dir zum Preis errichtet steht!
Ach, löse, Herr, die tiefe Nacht,
die noch der Menschen Seelen deckt!
Schenk uns den Abglanz deiner Macht,
die sich in Ewigkeit erstreckt!
Mein Herr und Vater, o blicke herab!
Senke dein Auge aus deinen Höhn!
Die Kraft, die mir dein Wunder gab,
laß jetzt noch nicht zugrunde gehn!*

*Allmächt'ger Vater, blick herab!
Hör mich im Staube zu dir flehn!
Mein Gott, der hohe Kraft mir gab,
erhöre mein tiefinbrünstig Flehn!*

ENGLISH:

*Almighty Father, look down!
Hear me cry out to you in the dust!
The power that your miracle gave me,
let not perish now!
You strengthened me, you gave me great strength,
you gave me sublime qualities:
to enlighten those who think lowly,
to lift what is buried in the dust.
You turned away the reproach of the people
to majesty, splendor and majesty!
O God, do not destroy the work,
that stands built for you at a price!
Oh, release, Lord, the deep night,
that still covers people's souls!
Give us the reflection of your power,
that stretches into eternity!
My Lord and Father, oh look down!
Lower your eyes from your scorn!
The strength that your miracle gave me,
let not perish now!
Almighty Father, look down!
Hear me cry out to you in the dust!
My God, who gave me great strength,
hear my deepest plea!*

(more)

5.



Gobbi as Scarpia

Is there a more heroic, courageous character in opera than Floria Tosca? If so, it's splitting hairs. Is there a scene in opera more fraught with the complex emotions accompanying vengeance? What, you say, how can murder be heroic, or require courage? Well, that's between you and your morality. I say that a woman who has been extorted for sexual favors by a police chief who is torturing her lover warrants sticking a knife into the guy. And this is what Trump, I mean Scarpia, does in act two of Puccini's "Tosca"--uses the life of the artist, Cavaradossi, as a wedge to extract a promise of sex from the popular and desirable chanteuse. It's one frightening sequence, here in a legendary, perhaps definitive performance by Maria Callas and Tito Gobbi, from 1962, in a production designed by Franco Zeffirelli. You may watch the entire act, or begin at 22:17, if you prefer. With English subtitles.

<https://youtu.be/xnFlg1z1hPc?si=d5jyZTI3kKGHU7XF>

ANNND. . .

For contrast, here is another incredibly dramatic rendering of the scene, with Sherrill Milnes and Raina Kabaivanska.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1UViP6tEzI>

SOL EXTRA!

ESSAY: LOVING TOSCA

<https://www.cincinnatiopera.org/tosca-essay>

6.

Beethoven, strange as it may seem, had a devil of a time writing an opera, and rewriting and opera, and rewriting an opera, but the end result is plenty fine, "Fidelio." How many operas or stories of his time dealt with heroines, for starters, let alone those as full of courage and derring-do as Leonora, the center of "Fidelio?" Consider: she disguises herself as a male prison guard ("Fidelio") in order to rescue her political prisoner husband, Florestan. Not bad, lady. It's a heart-rending saga of sacrifice, heroism, and, yes, triumph. Guts and pluck, in other words, will out. Yet it is not strictly drama; the opera famously

reflects Beethoven's general politics, his championing of freedom and justice, and his absolute rejection of Trump, I mean Napoleon, when the "liberator" revealed himself to be a dictator. A great highlight of the opera is "O welch' Lust," or "Oh, what a joy," where a chorus of political prisoners sings an ode to freedom after emerging from their cells and experiencing fresh air and light for the first time in forever. The prisoners are overjoyed at their freedom, but soon quiet down because they remember they could be caught and sent back.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhMdMD9tXB0>

Translation:

<https://www.opera-arias.com/beethoven/fidelio/o-welche-lust-im-freier-luft/>

7.

SOL does not post much modern opera, but here is an exception, "Farewell to thee, old 'Rights of Man,'" from "Billy Budd," by Benjamin Britten (based on the Herman Melville novel.) Although Billy is singing about a former ship on which he was impressed, the symbolism seems quite apt with the looming prospect of Trump and Vance attacking Constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedom. That aside, this is a good, stalwart, touching aria, if heavily tinged with the bittersweet, unresolved quality that characterizes Britten's writing (too much for SOL's taste.) Billy is full of nothing if not aplomb and brave spirit, which, really, is the center of the opera.

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

Synopsis:

When innocent, exuberant young seaman Billy Budd is pressed into service by the British navy, he starts a new life aboard the HMS Bellipotent. But his shout of goodbye to his former ship ('Farewell, old Rights 'o Man') is mistaken for an attempt to incite dissent and mutiny, attracting the unwelcome attention of Master-at-arms Trump, I mean Claggart, who is determined to crush this troublemaker.

Words:

<https://genius.com/Benjamin-britten-billy-budd-king-of-the-birds-lyrics>

8.



Jaho

This scene in Verdi's "La Traviata" well exemplifies the courage of self-sacrifice for a greater good. (Think: traditional Republicans compromising their convictions in voting Democratic in order to preserve the existing checks and balances of democracy.) In this tender, anguished duet between the courtesan,

Violetta, and Germont, the father of her lover, Alfredo, Violetta reluctantly agrees to never see him again---though her heart is breaking. Why? Germont explains that a marriage between Alfredo and a notorious woman would destroy the chances for his daughter to marry the man she loves. This is "Dite alle giovine," or "Tell your young daughter. . ." Ermonela Jaho and Dmitri Hvorostovsky do the honors.

<https://youtu.be/i7YI6J3eVbw?si=gsdUkvSX-H4m8u3A>

Translation:

(search for "Ah! dite alla" and start there.)

https://www.murashev.com/opera/La_traviata_libretto_English_Italian

Or if you prefer, Maria Callas and Ettore Bastianini, live in 1955:

<https://youtu.be/InbuwF9DDxA?si=TSIO-ZniGtBHDN3b>

SOL EXTRA!

Who was Violetta?

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

9.

There are many noble Puccini heroines, but none more than Liu in "Turandot," the composer's final opera. In this deranged Chinese fairy tale, the unattainable "ice queen," Turandot, is the constant target of would-be suitors who willingly enter into a game: answer three riddles and she will marry. Fail to answer the riddles, and the mooning Romeos die instead. And so Turandot piles up the bodies---until, that is, one Prince Calaf arrives in her domain, along with his servant, Liu (who secretly adores him.) When Calaf answers all three riddles correctly, the queen is horrified, fearful she will be subservient to a male---but Calaf offers a compromise: if she can guess his name, he will allow her to execute him! Such a deal. Turandot gets hold of Liu, and begins to torture her, demanding to know the prince's name, rather than be defiled by a male. The redoubtable Liu courageously refuses to divulge the information, even under torture, and kills herself rather than break down. This is the scene, and the pertinent aria is "Tu che di gel sei cinta" ("You who are girdled with ice"). With English subtitles:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOyy1fp4nh0>

And another, better staging, by Zeffirelli, but without captions. And Vittoria Yeo as Liu:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCIZ5-nwKMQ>

Translation:

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

SOL EXTRA!

JACK AT THE PIANO

(He is not playing the music you hear, which is the middle portion of "Musetta's Waltz" from "La Boheme.")

<https://www.facebook.com/watch?v=562517579495010>

FINAL BOW:



Corelli as Chenier

And back to Corelli. The current cliché, "speaking truth to power" would apply here---probably including the usually minimal impact it has. In Giordano's "Andrea Chenier," the poet and champion of the people, Chenier, is invited to a right-wing wing-ding thrown by Melania, Elon, and Donald---well, okay, the rich and powerful. But you take my point. The Countess hosting the affair asks the poet to recite for the collected elite, effectively turning him into a performing monkey. Well, Chenier recites, all right, a poem that contrasts the beauty of nature with the fiendishness, excess, and misery indulged by humankind. He heroically sings of the injustices suffered by working people, and condemns authority for simply perpetuating itself, and its wealth. My kind of poet! Courage? I dare say. Ironically, it costs him his life, later in the opera. Franco Corelli here sings the hell out of "Un di all'azzurro spazio guardai profondo" ("One day to the blue skies I looked profoundly. . .") With English subtitles. Let us hope that we have blue skies awaiting us after Nov. 5.

<https://youtu.be/mAxaOylAISY?si=xJoZwG9Sm7ESf39i>

Setting: The Ballroom in the Coigny's château

Synopsis: The Countess has asked Chénier to recite a poem but he refuses until Maddalena asks him. He contrasts the beauty of nature with the evilness and misery created by man. He denounces those in authority as self-serving.

Translation:

<https://www.aria->

[database.com/search.php?sid=2f394a2b229b43913ade319e2f110446&X=1&individualAria=49&fbclid=IwY2xjawGUY_NleHRuA2FlbQlxMAABHeu5RTxUZF2ORQTjOCvtbSiOsQog1CIHl85rNXRSrk6AB8l7vEa0dQjg_LQ_aem_q94fx1BkCG86Dn6Dx2HnAQ](https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?sid=2f394a2b229b43913ade319e2f110446&X=1&individualAria=49&fbclid=IwY2xjawGUY_NleHRuA2FlbQlxMAABHeu5RTxUZF2ORQTjOCvtbSiOsQog1CIHl85rNXRSrk6AB8l7vEa0dQjg_LQ_aem_q94fx1BkCG86Dn6Dx2HnAQ)

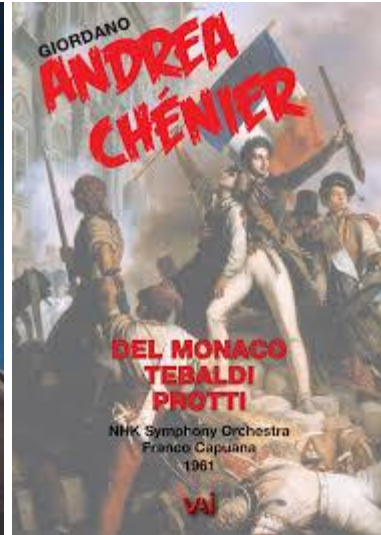
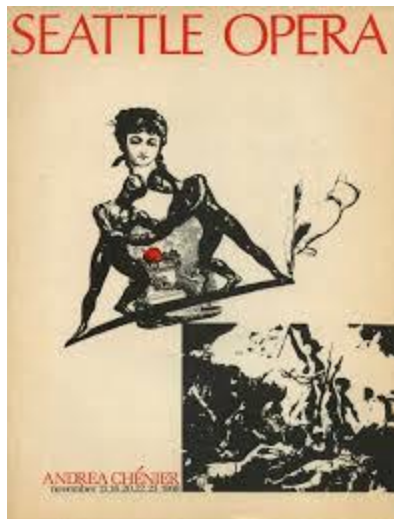
OR. . .if that did not blow your socks off enough, this will disintegrate them. Mario Lanza:

<https://medicine-opera.com/2013/12/andrea-chenier-improvviso/>

More about this aria, with many versions, as annotated by opera authority Neil Kurtzman:

<https://medicine-opera.com/2013/12/andrea-chenier-improvviso/>

(Opera posters below)



Chagall "Romeo and Juliet" poster for Paris Opera, 1964.

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Libretto di H. Meilhac e L. Halévy. Musica di G. Bizet

PARCO DELLE COLONNE
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