

Saturdee Opry Links Despair and Heartbreak Edition/ Rip Rense 11/09/24

Okay, kiddies, the Despair and Heartbreak Edition of Saturdee Opry Links is now posted. In deference to the collective mood of the remaining relatively sane people in the country. Wonnnderful selections today, just wonderful. It's a wow, absorbing from start to finish. Let the singing and the music wash over you, if you don't want to read about the context or exact meaning. It's good for you. Pay special attention to "Lensky's aria," especially the alternate versions I posted, and Angela Gheorghiu (gasp) and Giuseppe di Stefano, pre-cigarettes and booze. Overture, plus ten selections and one extra. Scroll down to see and hear the (water)works.

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

Live!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7uC5m-IRns>

(Jimmy Lennon voice)

All right, boxing fans, now that I have finished my commentary on the election (coming soon)---sure to change the course of history---it's time for Saturdee Opry Links.

What better overture, in view of circumstances, than "The Force of Destiny?" Verdi.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhtOrZjRH4o>



Lanza



Ramey



Gheorghiu



Lemeshev

1.

In today's Arias of Despair Edition of Saturdee Opry Links, we begin with King Philip II of Spain in Verdi's 1867 masterpiece, "Don Carlos." Elizabeth is in love with the heir to the king, Don Carlos, but marries his aging father instead, in order to consolidate peace in the kingdom. (It's complicated.) Late in the story, Philip realizes that his noble wife, who he adores, does not reciprocate his love, and never will. He wishes he could have read minds, in order to spare himself such heartbreak, and laments that the crown did not allow him this power---declaring that he will only be at peace when he dies. This is "Elle ne m'aime pas," or "She never loved me." The bass is Samuel Ramey. (Aria begins around the 2:40 mark.)

<https://youtu.be/flTgbcF0heY?si=GAptK8oMICpv7ihy>

Translation:

https://www.aria-database.com/translations/carlos08_ella.txt

2.



Marke

Poor Tristan. Poor Isolde. But poorer: King Marke. The two lovers are helplessly doomed to one another by a love potion, but Marke loses twice over---first, his beloved Isolde, and second, his greatest friend, Tristan, who seems to have deceived him by wooing the princess. He deeply laments this catastrophe, which he considers beyond solution, except of a dire kind. This is "Tatest du's wirklich," or, "Have you, indeed?" from Wagner's landmark of western civilization, "Tristan und Isolde." You can't get more broody than this. . .with Matthias Holle as Marke, from a ridiculous 1985 Bayreuth production. (No, I don't know what the lights on his shoulder are supposed to represent. Just chose this one because it is sung well and has English subtitles.)

<https://youtu.be/v5XCfLzt8vI?si=fwBFsBdCma6nvOsP>

Translation:

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

OR. . .if you prefer a saner looking presentation, here is the basso profundo, Franz-Josef Selig:

<https://youtu.be/8NQMqO7GPxk?si=95gPEEJB0MASfjZR>

3.

At one point in George Frederick Handel's opera, "Rinaldo," the abducted Almirena, who is the love of Rinaldo's life, sings of her poignant fate in the enchanted garden of Armida. The aria in question has become one of the most cherished in baroque opera, and, indeed, all opera (and is standard recital repertory.) It is, of course, "Lascia ch'io pianga," or "Let me weep." Music for our terrible time. Perhaps it will enable some of you to cry, I mean, sing along. . . Here is a beautiful performance with original instruments and soprano Kirsten Blaise, which affords an excellent impression of what a live performance would have been like in 1711, when "Rinaldo" was first performed. With English subtitles.

https://youtu.be/EKo_EmfEPWs?si=KLww8klep-ZfvOPS

Let me weep over my cruel fate,

And that I long for freedom!

Translation:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lascia_ch%27io_pianga

ANND. . .if you would prefer to see how it can look in the opera, here is Joyce Di Donato.

<https://youtu.be/PrJTmpt43hg?si=ZVkvziOgLYuj2JHA>

4.



Bernstein

"My world is dust now
and all I loved is dead."

At the outset of Leonard Bernstein's quirky opera, "Candide," the principal character sets out his life philosophy, as learned from the "wise" Dr. Pangloss, as a means of coping with unspeakable horror. "It Must Be So." Here is the wonderful late tenor, Jerry Hadley, with Bernstein conducting.

Synopsis:

In the country of Westphalia, Candide is about to be married to the lovely Cunegonde. Dr. Pangloss, Candide's teacher, expounds his famous philosophy, to the effect that all is for the best ("The Best of All Possible Worlds") The happy couple sing their marriage duet ("Oh, Happy We"), and the ceremony is about to take place ("Wedding Chorale") when war breaks out between Westphalia and Hesse. Westphalia is destroyed, and Cunegonde is raped, multiple times, and seemingly killed. Candide takes comfort in the resigned Panglossian doctrine ("It Must Be So") and sets out on his journeys.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dt1KuYS6eg>

Words:

My world is dust now,

And all I loved is dead.

*Oh, let me trust now
In what my master said:
"There is a sweetness in every woe."
It must be so.
It must be so.
The dawn will find me
Alone in some strange land.
But men are kindly
They'll give a helping hand.
So said my master, and he must know.
It must be so.
It must be so.*

COMMENT from a faithful SOL adherent:

Dr. Pangloss was an idiot! But this aria captures an American ethos, to be sure. Painful and true. We are all innocent and then war breaks out!

SOL REPLIES:

No shit. He and Polonius. "Helping hands," "sweetness in every woe," my woebegotten ass.

5.



Rachmaninov

Here is a bit of a rare item, from "Aleko," one of four operas by Sergei Rachmaninov. SOL does not go in too much for Russian angst, but this aria of lost love and betrayal is quite beautiful and moving--- especially as sung by the late Dmitri Hvorostovsky. Based on a play, "The Gypsies," by Pushkin, we find the protagonist, Aleko, attempting to cope with abandonment by Zemfira, the woman he loves. This is "Ves' tabar spit," or "All the tribe sleeps." With English subtitles.

https://youtu.be/ptjwYIGlj7Q?si=uVI08KXuNrK_8ez5

Synopsis:

A band of Gypsies has pitched its tents for the night on the bank of a river. Beneath a pale moon, they light campfires, prepare a meal and sing of the freedom of their nomadic existence. An old Gypsy tells a

story. Long ago, he loved Mariula who deserted him for another man, leaving behind Zemfira, their daughter. Zemfira is now grown up, has her own child, and lives with Aleko, a Russian who has abandoned civilisation for the Gypsy life. Hearing this story, Aleko is outraged that Zemfira's father took no revenge on Mariula. But Zemfira disagrees. For her, as for her mother, love is free, and she herself has already tired of Aleko's possessiveness and now loves a younger Gypsy, one of her own people.

For those wanting to sing along in Russian, and read the English:

<https://www.singrussian.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Rachmaninov-Alekos-aria.pdf>

6.

Today's Arias of Despair and Heartbreak Edition, apropos of the horror now befalling our country and the world, continues. The somewhat eclipsed opera, "L'arlesiana" (1897), by Francesco Cilea, is based on the play, "L'Arlésienne" ("The Woman of Arles") by Alphonse Daudet. Yes, this story is also the inspiration for Bizet's fabulous "L'arlesienne Suites." In essence, Federico is madly in love with the beautiful, unattainable "L'arlesiana"---even after he learns of her callousness, cunning, and treachery. (Much as most of the country remains madly in love with Trump despite his callousness, cunning, and treachery!) Such is the sad fate of many a love-smitten male, and no, folks, this opera does not end well for Fred. This is the "Lamento di Federico," or "Frederick's Lament," sung with gut-wrenching anguish by the one and only Mario Lanza, whose real name was Fred(!), live on the radio in 1952.

<https://youtu.be/pzT2z4DLK24?si=qdJTKRPjKmQYrPub>

Translation:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%88_la_solita_storia_del_pastore

OR. . .if you would like to see how it can look on stage. . .Here is Mario again:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKU3XEtUEGI>

7.



Here is an astonishing performance by Angela Gheorghiu in her prime. Breathtaking, nothing less. "Sola, perduta abbandonata," from Puccini's "Manon Lescaut" takes a grain of salt or two to believe, in the overall context of the story, but this is no hindrance to feeling the effects of this aria. Manon, banished to the New World for her "crimes" in Paris, which boil down to having left a controlling bully of a sugar daddy, wanders into desolate territory and dies of exposure, "Alone, lost, abandoned." Much as Lady Liberty now is, you'll indulge a clumsy simile.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RP8qywehkkI>

Translation:

<https://classicalmusicandmusicians.com/2018/06/17/puccini-manon-lescaut-sola-perduta-abbandonata/>

SOL EXTRA!

One astonishing performance by Angela Gheorghiu deserves another. Here she is with an aria from Verdi's late opera, "Un Ballo en Maschera" ("A Masked Ball"), "Morrò, ma prima in grazia" ("I will die, but first, a kindness.") Assuming incorrectly that Amelia has cheated on him, her husband, Renato, tells her that she must die. Protesting her innocence, Amelia relents, and asks permission to embrace their son one last time.

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

Translation:

<https://opera-cat.livejournal.com/17765.html>

8.



Tchaikovsky

Oh, what a tangled web. . .The best laid plans of. . .How have the mighty fallen. . .O, that all should come to this. . .and many other classic cliches must apply to this moment in Tchaikovsky's 1879 opera, "Eugene Onegin." Based on a Pushkin novel-in-verse, the opera concerns a cavalier, self-centered hero (Onegin) who lives to regret his blasé rejection of a young woman's pure love, and his careless incitement of a fatal duel with his best friend, Lensky. In this scene, at a ball, Lensky renounces his friendship with Onegin in response to taunting over jealousy, and challenges Onegin to the duel. On the morning of the duel, on the banks of a river, Lensky sings of his lost youth, wondering how he has arrived at such a terrible point in his life. "Kuda, kuda, vi udalilis." The tenor is Pavol Breslik. With English subtitles.

ORRR. . .If you prefer (SOL fan Charlie Bogle does), here is the astounding Sergei Lemeshev, the most beloved tenor in Russian history.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwLWLQ9Gz3Q>

And, if you don't know it, you really must read about Lemeshev's career, which included several years singing with one lung.

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

Of course, Neil Shicoff might have sung this better than any man, plant, or animal in the cosmos. This is staggering:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HavZY7vUMyY>

AND FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO SING ALONG:

<https://www.singrussian.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Tchaikovsky-Lenskys-aria.pdf>

9.



Opera, as my old man used to say, imbues all our peccadillos and banalities with grandeur, nobility, poignancy, importance. . . greatness, really. When you think of it, the plots tend to center around pretty shabby quotidian human stuff: love triangles, jealousies, blackmail, power-mongering, deceit, treachery, betrayal, murder. All the good stuff. But the singing and the music, well, it's like decorating a molehill with a mountain of gold. Or something like that. Puccini's "Tosca" was famously dismissed by renowned music critic Joseph Kerman as a "shabby little shocker" (how he must have hated having a lifetime of good work trivialized by one comment.) Why? Snobbery, is all I can figure. "Tosca" is hardly the only opera to feature a such lowbrow plot devices as a fiendish male abusing his authority to blackmail a gorgeous singer/actress into sexual favors. . . In any case, Tosca's lover, the artist, Cavaradossi, has been saved from torture and death by Tosca's manipulation of the chief of police, Scarpia----who has agreed to spare his life in exchange for a little frolicking. How? She has arranged with Scarpia that Cavaradossi be shot by firing squad for treason---but that the soldiers all use blanks, so that she and Cav can rush away to happily-ever-after exile. One problem, or, well, two problems. Tosca stabs Scarpia to death after this is arranged, and must sweat out being discovered before the mock execution. The other problem, well, wait just a second and I'll tell you. First, Cavaradossi, still thinking he is to be killed, heroically laments his fate on the night before the execution, in the soaring, heart-rending aria, "E Lucevan le Stelle." Which, by the way, always somehow sounds utterly spontaneous---part of the miracle of Puccini's writing. Here is Mario Lanza, in the one and only film of him singing this aria. (Oh, the other problem? Scarpia, contrary to what he told Tosca, did not arrange to have the soldiers fire blanks.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-moqF21ljFw>

Translation:

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

ANND. . . how it can look on stage, with Mario del Monaco:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0R-F4RmeKK0>

FINAL BOW:



Di Stefano

Our Despair and Heartbreak Edition, in observance of recent electoral events in the remains of this country, concludes with what probably is the aria that best expresses resolve to, as SOL's little maxim goes, "persevere through relentless absurdity." No, Canio does not make out well in the end of Ruggero Leoncavallo's verismo classic, "Il Pagliacci," but at one point in the story, he exhibits a kind of sad, reluctant---but noble---resolve. Canio, of course, is part of a traveling troupe of actors, along with his wife, Nedda, and one Tonio. Faced with the knowledge that his wife is actually in love with Tonio, the crushed, psychologically obliterated Canio nonetheless prepares for a new performance with them, applying clown make-up, and singing "Vesti la giubba," or "Put on the costume." Meaning, of course, get on with the job of living as best as one can, under the circumstances. I'm sure the relevance to today is clear. "Laugh at the grief that poisons your heart," he sings. Here is Giuseppe di Stefano when he was still absolutely great. With English subtitles.

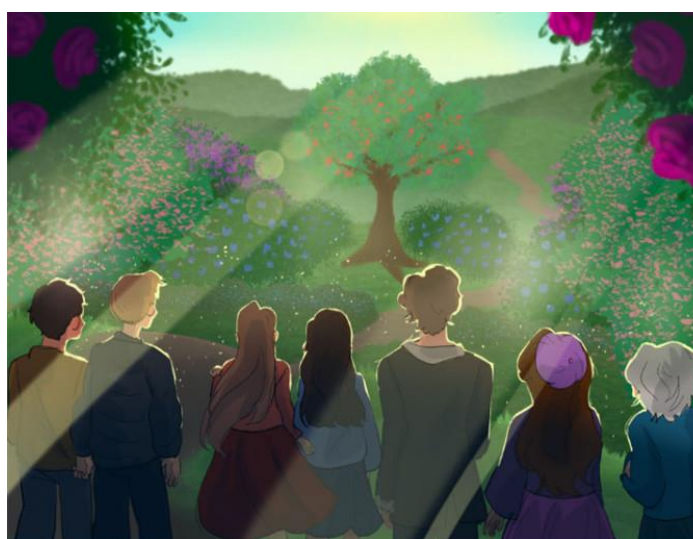
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cYc5QCoYg4>

(Opera posters below)

PAGLIACCI



METROPOLITAN OPERA



Candide
Performed by the UAA Opera Ensemble and the University Singers
Friday, April 19, 7:30 PM
Saturday, April 20, 4:00 PM
Saturday, April 20, 7:30 PM
Sunday, April 21, 4:00 PM
UAA Fine Arts Recital Hall

UAA Department of Music
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

CenterTix





