Saturdee Opry Links Fantastic Edition is now posted. Nymphs, trips to the moon, water that cures blindness, elves, fairies, giants, earth goddesses, talking foxes, magic rainbows, a snow maiden, talking seasons(!)---all here for your curiosity and wonderment. Overture plus ten selections. As always, thrown together in haste every Saturday, or most of 'em, by Rip Rense. Salud. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zxAiUQu0v8

# Saturdee Opry Links Overture.

"Il Mondo della Luna," ("The World of the Moon"), by Haydn. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxgQ1tXKt7o



**Viglione-Borghese** 



**Lisette Oropesa** 



Ambrogio Maestri



**Birgit Finnilä** 

# 1.

The modern trend of setting operas in ridiculous circumstances must have hit its peak, or low, with the Paris Opera staging of Puccini's "La Boheme" on the moon (with Mimi as a ghost, for some idiotic reason.) Well, here is an opera that is actually set on the moon, or at least an imaginary moon---Franz Joseph Haydn's "Il Mondo della Luna" ("The World on the Moon.") Really. The plot:

A rich old fool, Buonafede ("good faith") is opposed to the marriage of his two daughters and their maid to the three penniless jokers that they love. Well, it seems that the old coot has a hobby: astronomy, and that one of the would-be suitors, Ecclitico ("ecliptic"), is a charlatan astrologer (redundant). Hmm. You see where this might go. To the moon, Alice! Ecclitico fools the old fool into thinking he has been magically transported to the moon! Presented to the lunar emperor, Buonafede is dazzled by "Lunatic" mores and court etiquette, and that's just the start. So popular was this story in its time that six different composers, including Papa Haydn, set Carlo Goldoni's libretto to music with operas of the same name. Haydn's came along in 1777, late in his career. Here we have SOL's favorite (dyed) redhead soprano, Patricia Petibon, recording the aria, "Ragion nell'alma siede," or "Reason sits in the soul," from act one. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBYqPOW2gGg

# TRANSLATION:

**ITALIAN:** Ragion nell'alma siede regina dei pensieri, ma si disarma e cede se la combatte amor. E amor, se occupa il trono, di re si fa tiranno, e sia tributo o dono, vuol tutto il nostro cor. ENGLISH: Reason sits in the soul Reason sits in the soul Queen of thoughts, But she is disarmed and forfeits If she is fought by love. And love, if it occupies the throne, Like a king it becomes a tyrant, And be it a tribute or gift, It wants our entire heart. MORE ABOUT THE OPERA: https://www.operatoday.com/content/2010/01/il mondo della .php https://opera-guide.ch/operas/il+mondo+della+luna/synopsis/en/

2.



Okay, kids, just for fun, here is the scene from Haydn's comedy, "Il Mondo della Luna," just before Buonafede is tricked into thinking he is actually on the moon. Synopsis:

Buonafede, the gullible old man fascinated with stars, does not have a clue about the moon. Ecclitico explains that through his powerful telescope, they will be able to see the moon's transparent surface all the way through the houses, and, more important, be able to spy on ladies as they undress! A double moon! An excited Buonafede attempts to view the lunar surface through Ecclitico's telescope while Ecclitico's servants move caricatures in front of the lens. Buonafede is, shall we say, over the moon. He describes what he thinks he has seen: a very beautiful young girl caressing an old man, a husband ready to punish his wife for her infidelity, and a man who completely dominates his female lover. It's gets loonier from there.

# https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBcR4X-C494

Translation: BUONAFEDE Oh che cosa mi dite? Colà v'è un altro mondo? Ma cosa son quei segni che si vedon nel corpo della luna? So che un giorno mia nonna, la qual non era sciocca, mi disse ch'ella avea gli occhi e la bocca.

# ECCLITICO

Scioccherie, scioccherie. Le macchie oscure son del mondo lunar colline e monti. Non già monti sassosi, come da noi veggiam, ma son formati d'una tenue materia, la qual s'arrende e cede alla pression del piede; indi s'alza bel bello e non si spacca, onde l'uomo cammina e non si stracca. BUONAFEDE Oh che bel mondo! Ma ditemi, amico, come siete arrivato a scoprir cosa tale?

# ECCLITICO

Ho fatto un cannocchiale che arriva a penetrar cotanto in dentro che veder fa la superficie e il centro. Individua non solo i regni e le provincie, ma le case, le piazze e le persone. Col mio cannocchialone posso veder lassù, per mio diletto, spogliar le donne quando vanno a letto.

# BUONAFEDE

Oh bellissima cosa! Ma dite, non potrei, caro Ecclitico mio, col vostro cannocchial veder anch'io?

# ECCLITICO

Perché no? Benché io sia solo inventor della mirabil arte, voglio che ancora voi ne siate a parte. BUONAFEDE Obbligato vi sono, e vi sarò. Vederete per voi cosa farò.

#### ECCLITICO

Nella specula entrate; nel cannocchial mirate. Cose belle vedrete, cose rare, per cui voi stupirete.

# BUONAFEDE

Vado, e provar io voglio, se con quel cannocchial sì lungo e tondo alla luna poss'io vedere il fondo. Ma chi son quei signori, che dove io deggio entrar, vengono fuori?

# ECCLITICO

Sono scolari miei, amanti della luna come lei.

#### ENGLISH:

GOOD FAITH Oh what are you telling me? Is there another world there? But what are those signs? what are seen in the body of the moon? I know that one day my grandmother, who wasn't stupid, told me that it had eyes and a mouth.

#### ECLITICAL

Nonsense, nonsense. The dark spots Hills and mountains are from the lunar world. Not stony mountains, as we see them, but they are formed of a tenuous matter, which gives up and gives in to the pressure of the foot; then it rises beautifully and does not split, whereby man walks and does not get tired. GOOD FAITH Oh what a beautiful world! But tell me, friend, how did you arrive to discover such a thing?

#### ECLITICAL

I made a telescope which manages to penetrate so much inside what seeing does the surface and the center. Identify not only the kingdoms and provinces, but the houses, the squares and the people. With my spyglass I can see up there, for my pleasure, undress women when they go to bed.

GOOD FAITH Oh beautiful thing! But tell me, I couldn't, my dear Ecclitico, with your telescope can I see too? ECLITICAL Why not? Although I am only inventor of the wonderful art, I want you to still be apart of it. GOOD FAITH I am obliged to you, and I will be there. You will see for yourselves what I will do.

ECLITICAL In speculate revenue; aim in the telescope. You will see beautiful things, rare things, which will amaze you.

GOOD FAITH I go, and I want to try, if with that long and round telescope I can see the bottom of the moon. But who are those gentlemen, that where I have to enter, do they come out?

ECLITICAL They are my students, moon lovers like her.



From an opera on the moon, at least in effect, to one about fairies, here is a baritone aria from Puccini's early, eerie supernatural venture, "Le Villi."

Setting: A town in the Black Forest during spring.

Synopsis: The daughter of Guglielmo Wulf, head forester, has died, apparently because she has been danced to death by fairies conjured by a witch who has seduced Anna's fiance, Roberto. Danced to death by fairies? Yes, it can happen in fairy tales, and West Hollywood. Angry at Roberto's betrayal, and filled with sorrow at his daughter's death, Guglielmo prays that the same fairies will wreak their vengeance upon Roberto. (Think I might change my name to Guglielmo Wulf.)

Here is the forgotten bass-baritone, Domenico Viglioine-Borhese, in a 1909 reading whose power endures.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ij1Be7ygNas

Annund, so you can hear how it sounds with more modern recording technology, a version with the more mellifluent, if less dramatic, Leo Nucci. (Aria proper starts around 2:50.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mS5ULYmKpes

TRANSLATION:

No! possibil non Ã<sup>°°</sup> che invendicata Resti la colpa sua.

Vivea beata e tranquilla al mio fianco

La mia dolce figliola,

Ed egli venne e, colla sua parola,

D'amor le smanie in lei destÃ<sup>2</sup>

Chi, dunque, o scellerato,

Chi l'amor tuo ti chiese?

Quali orribili offese t'abbiam mai fatto noi

Per uccider quell'angelo

E agli estremi miei giorni serbar cotanta angoscia?

No! possibil non è che invendicata

Resti colpa sÃ- grande!

Anima santa della figlia mia,

Se la leggenda delle Villi Ã<sup>"</sup> vera,

Deh! non esser con lui, qual fosti pia

Ma qui l'attendi al cader della sera...

S'io potessi saperti vedicata

Lieto saluterei l'ultimo dì...

Ah, perdona, Signor, l'idea spietata

Che dal mio cor, che sanguina fuggì...

# ENGLISH:

No! possible is nothing but unavenged It's his fault. She lived blissfully and peacefully by my side My sweet daughter, And he came and, with his word, He awoke the yearnings in her for love Who, then, oh villain, Who did your love ask you? What horrible offenses have we ever done to you To kill that angel And at the end of my days, remain so much anguish? No! possible is nothing but unavenged You remain so guilty! Holy soul of my daughter, If the legend of the Wilis is true, Oh! do not be with him, as you were pious But here you wait for him at nightfall... If only I could know you were old I would happily say goodbye on the last day... Ah, forgive me, Mr., the ruthless idea Who fled from my bleeding heart...

ANNNND... How it can look on stage: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eL2kaikA2c



Question: when is Verdi not Verdi? Answer: when he imitates Debussy. I'm no opera authority, if you haven't noticed, but when I first heard this at 3 a.m.---on that PBS classics thing that runs all night---I couldn't imagine who the composer was. And I thought I knew Verdi's musical character. Here, from Verdi's final opera, "Falstaff," is the gentle, transporting sequence where Nanetta, disguised as Queen of the Fairies, summons all her magical minions. This is "Sul fil d'un soffio etesio" ("On the breath of a fragrant breeze, fly, nimble spirits"). The soprano is Lisette Oropesa. With English subtitles. (You'll have to turn this up a fair amount to hear clearly.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wp9POXqRlvA

Setting: Windsor Park, Windsor, England, early 15th century

Synopsis: Nannetta, disguised as the Fairy Queen, calls the fairies out of their hiding places and commands them to dance.

Translation:

http://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=577 Full synopsis:

Herne's Oak in Windsor Park on a moonlit midnight.Nannetta, as the Fairy Queen, instructs her helpers ("Sul fil d'un soffio etesio" / "On the breath of a fragrant breeze, fly, nimble spirits") before all the characters arrive on the scene.

# 5.

Continuing from post # 4, with Verdi's "Falstaff". . .Dressed as supernatural creatures, Falstaff's friends plan to ambush and torment him at midnight, punishing him for his plotting, lechery, and puffery. They arrive, witnessing Falstaff's attempted seduction of one Alice. The friends, disguised as elves and fairies, humiliate Falstaff for his chicanery, buffoonery. In the middle of this prank, however, Falstaff recognizes his friend, Bardolfo, through the disguise. The joke is blown, and Falstaff merrily acknowledges that he has received his comeuppance, and proclaims that all the world is folly, and all are figures of fun (Tutto nel mondo è burla ... Tutti gabbati!...Ma ride ben chi ride La risata final. / "Everything in the world is a jest ... but he laughs well who laughs the final laugh"). No argument here. The entire company repeats his proclamation in nothing less than a ten-voice fugue. Here it is, with English subtitles, and Ambrogio Maestri as Old Jack.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb7-3VUESW0

# 6.



In today's Fantastic (literal use, not superlative) Edition of SOL, we have so far gone to the moon, and hosted an array of fairies, witches, elves. Now to a singing fox. Yes, it's the 1923 one-hour animal tale, "The Cunning Little Vixen." One of many excellent operas by the Czech composer, Leos Janacek. Here is a clip that puts across how beautiful the music is:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6fKghXxcQM ANNND, here is "Vixen's aria." With English subtitles. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwzAhGFWpls About:

The stories about the pet vixen, Bystrouška, were serialized in 1920 in the Lidové noviny newspaper. The author - the writer and journalist Rudolf Těsnohlídek - wrote them based on the charming drawings by the artist Stanislav Lolek. Janacek transformed the originally comedic cartoon into a philosophical

reflection on the cycle of life by ending with the death of the titular Vixen, with a characteristically colorful, playful, inventive score.

Synopsis:

This is the tale of a young fox cub, Vixen Sharp-Ears, who is captured by a Forester and taken home as a pet. But she is treated cruelly by the Forester's family, and eventually manages to escape – by inciting a rebellion in the chicken coop and then slaughtering all the hens! The Vixen then makes her home in the forest, while the Forester drinks at an inn with a Schoolmaster and Parson. As they drunkenly stumble home, the Schoolmaster sees the Vixen and mistakes her for a girl he loves, while the vengeful Forester takes a shot at her. Vixen flees, and later meets and falls in love with a charming Fox, finds she is expecting cubs, and the two have a hasty wedding. Will it be happily ever after? NPR FEATURE:

https://www.npr.org/2010/08/06/129001487/quirk-of-nature-janaceks-cunning-little-vixen

# SOL EXTRA!

YES, the entire "Cunning Little Vixen" has been animated! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNWITZTd2Ng





# **Erda warns Wotan**

Wagner the ecologist? In "Das Rheingold," the first of the man's four titanic "Ring" operas, the earth goddess, Erda, rises from the depths to warn vainglorious Wotan, chief of the gods, that they are headed for the last round-up. (As is our ecology, courtesy of Roundup, the "weed killer.") There is a subtext throughout the "Ring" of earth and nature being doomed by the folly of the gods. Well, what's a metaphor, anyhow? (In some unduly hopeful stagings, after Wotan and Co. have destroyed everything, nature reasserts "herself.") Anyhow, for Erda's warning, go to 1:58:50 of this entire "Rheingold" performance. "Weiche, Wotan," roughly translated as "Wotan, watch your ass." With English subtitles. The contralto is Birgit Finnilä.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFCFq6WWmGE

Synopsis: Erda rises from the earth to give a warning to Wotan and the rest of the gods. She cautions that if Wotan continues to have anything to do with the magic all-powerful Ring of the Nibelungs, the gods will be eventually thrown from power.



**Melisande and Pelleas** 

Now, we all love Debussy, do we not? Who isn't bowled over by, and intoxicated with, his suite, "La Mer," or the tone poems, "Afternoon of a Faun," "Printemps," the pristine beauty of "Three Nocturnes" (wow), the string quartet, and on and on. So it follows that a Debussy opera would be similarly captivating, yes? WellIIII. . .uh. . .Yes, the music is ethereally lovely, gossamer stuff, as per Debussy's "impressionistic" musical character. But. . .where are the themes? Where are the racks to hang one's aesthetic hat on? Where is there something to grab on to, amid the endlessly drifting colors, wisps of sound, gorgeous as they are? I attended Debussy's opera, "Pelleas et Melisande," cold, decades ago, expecting "La Mer" type fare, and wow, gadzooks, huh?---did I ever regret getting first-row student tickets! I've never been so mystified by a great work in my life. Perhaps you will feel differently. I hope so. Hell, maybe I would, too, if I were to take my old self to the opera all over again. In any case, here is an excerpt from one of two of Debussy's only finished operas, based on the dreamlike play by Materlink---a love triangle in mythical medieval times. This is "Don't you know where I've brought you?" With Jacques Imbrailo and Mari Eriksmoen. With English subtitles.

# It is a hot summer day. Pelléas has led Mélisande to one of his favorite spots, the "Blind Men's Well". People believed it possesses miraculous powers to cure blindness but since the old king's eyesight started to fail, they no longer believe. Mélisande lies down on the marble rim of the well and tries to see to the bottom. Her hair loosens and falls into the water. Pelléas notices how extraordinarily long it is. He remembers that Golaud first met Mélisande beside a spring and asks if he tried to kiss her at that time but she does not answer. Mélisande plays with the ring Golaud gave her, throwing it up into the air until it slips from her fingers into the well. Uh-oh.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVW0lhxK26Y

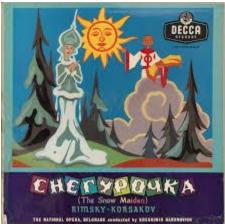
MORE about the opera:

https://theconversation.com/decoding-the-music-masterpieces-debussys-only-opera-pelleas-and-melisande-

<u>104691?fbclid=lwAR1Mxgzroae0wtPNRmG69620Ayyj7ktPXq1REyu400NShJ6QZmg75pG52i4\_aem\_AeFe</u> <u>AkvhR\_Zuh3UEl1nCPF\_Q5X3GXKbPcmQkTR1hJMLMrYrD22KnlbpXl1bvZzohzkcEzIqwBf\_F9p83OCNgrOLS</u>

8.

9.



Now, if only Debussy had taken more of a cue from Rimsky-Korsakov with "Pelleas et Melisande," specifically from Rimsky's woefully under-performed opera, "The Snow Maiden." Not only are the composer's typically beguiling orchestral colors there, casting spells, but there is discernible structure (dare I say melodic?) to the proceedings. This is "Mama, slikhala ya, slikhala," or "Mama, I have heard the singing of the larks..."

# https://youtu.be/bF7UXL6dzOI?si=M-2YLLSssCLr9HC4

From Wikipedia:

"The story deals with the opposition of eternal forces of nature and involves the interactions of mythological characters (Frost, Spring, Wood-Sprite), real people (Kupava, Mizgir'), and those inbetween, i.e., half-mythical, half-real (Snow Maiden, Lel', Berendey). The composer strove to distinguish each group of characters musically, and several individual characters have their own associated leitmotifs. In addition to these distinctions, Rimsky-Korsakov characterized the townspeople particularly with folk melodies."

Synopsis:

On Red Hill, near the Berendeyans' trading quarter and Tsar Berendey's capital. The fifteen-year-old Snow Maiden wants to live with the people in the nearby village, and her parents, Spring Beauty and Grandfather Frost, agree to let her be adopted by Bobyl-Bakula and his wife. TRANSLATION:

SNEGUROCHKA (SNOW MAIDEN) Mama, I have heard the singing of the larks quivering high above the cornfields, and the sad call of the swan over the quiet waters; I have heard the plangent trilling of the nightingales your favourite songsters; Lel's songs I hold more dear, and day and night would gladly listen to his shepherd's lays. You listen and you melt. . . Frost You hear? Melt! A dreadful meaning lies hid in that word. Snegurochka, fly...

ANNNNNND...HERE IS another bit from this alluring opera... https://youtu.be/eBkRBVCxZbY?si=LlpD9SD5XeekISc1 TRANSLATION: Frost: You hear? Melt! A dreadful meaning lies hid in that word. Snegurochka, fly... ...from Lel! Fear his words and his songs!

SPRING Her mother won't permit you to keep...

SNEGUROCHKA I am your obedient daughter; ... ... but truth to tell, neither Lel nor his songs do I fear.

SPRING ... our daughter pining in captivity. Frost Fly, fly from Lel!

SPRING Snegurochka, whenever you feel sad, or stand in need of anything, come to Yartlo's valley, call me, ask what you will—I'll not refuse you.

PLUS. . . A wonderful choral passage! <u>https://youtu.be/a2MlgRwmq5A?si=mUIj\_f-zxSjEEE7z</u> ABOUT THE OPERA: <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\_Snow\_Maiden</u> <u>https://archive.org/stream/lp\_snegurochka-the-snow-maiden\_nikolai-rimskykorsakov-orkestar-beogradske/lp\_snegurochka-the-snow-maiden\_nikolai-rimskykorsakov-orkestar-beogradske\_djvu.txt</u>

#### **FINAL BOW:**



Rainbow shaping up for crossing into Valhalla

Today's Fantastic Edition (literal, not superlative) concludes with gods, water nymphs, and a rainbow to a city in the sky. This, of course, would be the conclusion of Wagner's "Das Rheingold," the first of the four "Der Ring des Nibelungen" opera sagas. Here, in short, Wotan, the CEO of the Gods, has played fast and loose with everyone and everything in his efforts to secure the Rhine gold stolen by the crazed dwarf, Trump. I mean Alberich. For those keeping score at home, you'll recall that Alberich was flirting with the effervescent nixies known as Rhine maidens, only to be rebuffed in the end. In retaliation, Al threatened to steal the gold that the maidens love and protect, shining there, in the depths of the river. The nixies laugh mockingly, explaining that only one who has renounced love could get his hands on the glitter. Well, Alberich wasn't due to have much luck with the ladies, anyhow, so what's a little love renunciation to him? He swears allegiance to hatred, pilfers the gold, and embarks on world conquest. Like Trump! Wotan double-deals and risks godly life and limb to finally acquire the Rhine gold, now forged by Alberich into a ring (imbued with the power to, what else, rule the universe.) In the end of the opera, Wotan is warned by Erda, the earth goddess, to give up the grift and facilitate the return of the gilt to the Rhine maidens, or cause the destruction of, well, everything. (See post #7.) Along lumber the giants Fasolt and Fafnir, the brothers employed by Wotan to build Valhalla---the city in the sky. Arguing over the ring, they brawl, and Fafnir clubs Fasolt to death. So much for brotherly love. And so the curse begins. Led by Loge, the deceitful, cunning self-interested god of fire, the coterie of heavenly hosts finally bursts into derisive laughter at any suggestion of their folly, and they all beat cheeks over a magic rainbow to Valhalla. Or something like that. Here is that sequence, with English subtitles, culminating with the "Entrance of the Gods into Valhalla." Start at 2:03:40. With English subtitles. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFCFq6WWmGE

Better synopsis:

https://www.metopera.org/user-information/synopses-archive/das-

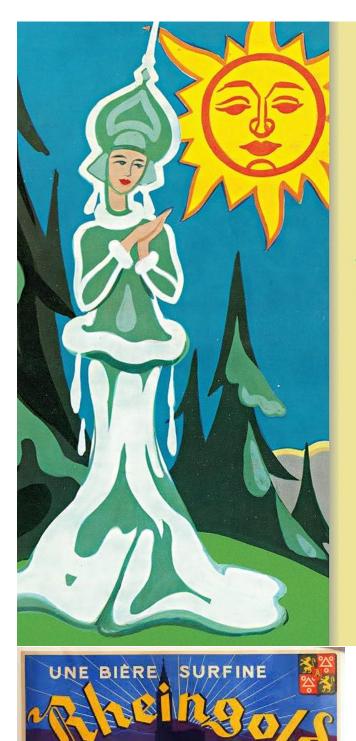
rheingold?fbclid=IwAR0X2S\_KQtprx1D09uNZg9eUq8A6ffcsGKds5mbOuHIoL2daWdCEaJ0Lh6c\_aem\_AeF pq4h1Z02YaaEH7r0LLls2fPcXvP-ZsrXoYdTjtXcb4qKHWgLy6tTU08v5fd5clcuutK2TBJcJjwnH37GHm45T











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# **RIMSKY-KORSAKOV**

The Snow Maiden (Snegurochka)

> Belgrade National Opera Krešimir Baranović

