

Saturdee Opry Links Forgotten Singers Edition/ Rip Rense

Saturdee Opry Links is/are posted. A forgotten singers edition, mostly ladies, with some surprises along the way. As Annette Hanshaw used to say, "That's all."

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

Saturdee Opry Links Overture.

The well-known overture to the forgotten 1831 opera comique about a pirate, "Zampa," by one Ferdinand Herold.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYG1iQoil8w>

About the opera:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zampa>



Bruna Castagna



Shirley Verrett



Sylvia Sass



Irene Abendroth



Germana DiGiulio

1.



Theda Bara



Castagna

So many singers. . . The forgotten Italian mezzo, Bruna Castagna, had a solid 20-year career in Europe, South America, and the USA (where she sang many a role at the Met.) Along the way, she sang in a world premiere of the now-forgotten "Il Dibuk," by one Lodovico Rocca, finally retiring permanently to Argentina in 1945 at only 40(!). As is the case with most opera singers, she was plenty good (she recorded "Un Ballo" with Bjorling and Zinka Milanov), but not "the best," "the greatest". . . No Callas "la divina" nickname for Bruna. She was "just" a fine artist dedicated to opera and its craft. And really, what is "greater" than that? Here is her dusky voice with the "Seguidilla" from Bizet's "Carmen." (Looks like she's trying to out-Theda Theda Bara in the photo.) "Pres des ramparts de Sevilla." ("Near the ramparts of Seville.")

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5ErSlxRuyA>

What is a "sequidilla," anyway?

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seguidilla>

Setting: A square in Seville

Synopsis: After Carmen is arrested for fighting another girl in the cigarette factory (catfight!), Don Jose is assigned to watch her. She sings that she wants to go to her friend Lillias Pastia's inn and insinuates that she would like him to go with her.

Translation:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=43>

2.

Bruna Castagna's smoky mezzo not only was adept at lyricism (see post # 1), but had a commanding, dramatic voice and acting presence on stage, as this gripping brief excerpt from Verdi's "Aida" demonstrates:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sw8ADJg3b5E>

And she was an exemplar of the more subtle and elusive dramatic fare, as this moving passage, "Ces Lettres," from Massenet's "Werther," demonstrates. Castagna would certainly be hailed as one of the best in the business, were she singing today.

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

Summary:

Setting: the Magistrate's house at Christmas, Frankfurt, Germany, 1780.

Synopsis: Charlotte reads Werther's letters to her which describe his sorrow that they are apart and the happiness he will feel when they are reunited. His ardent declarations make her realize that she still loves him.

Translation:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=654>

3.



There are wildly dramatic passages in opera that I find engaging, compelling, even thrilling, but my preference (maybe everyone's) is for the sublime moments of melody and beauty. If that makes me a rube, nothing I can do about it. Here is one such moment, with, again, the wonderful mezzo Bruna Castagna, in one of the premiere arias for her type of voice: the redoubtable "Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix," ("My heart opens to your voice") from "Samson and Delilah" by Saint-Saens. Notice how she goes from sweet and almost waif-like to lush and hypnotic. And if you don't know the plot, good luck. Hint: Samson does not need a barber.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LXNh1-vHX0>

Setting: the valley of Soreck, ancient Palestine

Synopsis: In an attempt to close the trap which she has set for Samson, Dalila tells Samson seductively that she will surrender herself entirely to him if he wants her. She begs him to respond to her caresses, hoping that he will finally forget about the Israelite rebellion he is leading against the Philistines. If Samson concentrates completely on her, the High Priest of Dagon may be able to capture him.

Translation:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=916>

An alternate telling of the story:

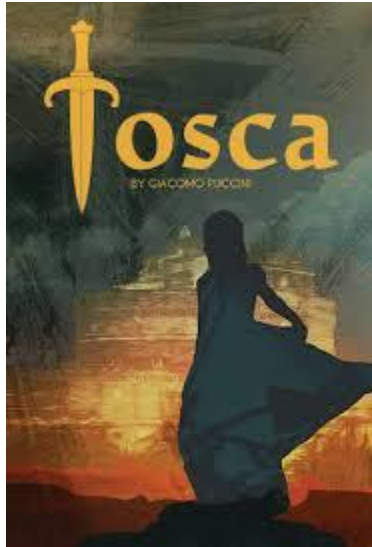
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oW5hvQmHLdY>

And just to give a little contrast, showing how different vocal characters can affect a given aria, here is a dynamite performance of the aria by Shirley Verrett on The Ed Sullivan Show:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WFCTv8Qoro>

(SOL maven Chris Tombrello notes that Verrett went for the “big finish” on the Sullivan Show. Absolutely right. This was often the case with opera stars performing operas on “Sullivan”---that is, they would bring in a “big note” at the end, whether it was written or not.)

4.



As with Bruna Castagna, forgotten lyric soprano Sylvia Sass retired very young---at only 45, in her case. The enormously gifted Hungarian singer was very successful in Europe and sang at the met with Jose Carreras in a 1977 "Tosca," but---by all accounts---burned her voice out while trying to take on dramatic roles prematurely. This, of course, is the big danger for any lyric voice. It didn't help that the crazed press was trying to cast her as the next Maria Callas, I'm sure. So she wound up in lesser houses, and many appearances in South America (where she was well loved.) Still with us at 72, Ms. Sass retired to Hungary. Here she is with "Vissi d'arte," from "Tosca." (Note: perhaps the squeak toward the end is an example of how she was overtaxing her voice.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzZ8WzT6vh0>

Synopsis:

Tosca has agreed to sexual favors with the fiendish chief of police, Scarpia, in exchange for sparing the life of her artist lover, Cavaradossi, imprisoned and tortured. She asks God why "He" is so cruel and unjust. (Perhaps the little squeak in this performance is an indicator of a voice strained beyond its capability.)

TRANSLATION:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=302>

SOL EXTRA!

May Day! May Day! Yes, it's time for our annual posting of "Im Wunderschoenen Monat Mai" ("In the wonderful month of May"), the charming lied by Robert Schumann, from his "Dichterliebe." Sung by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x11PRuuOVn0>

Annnnd, if you would like to hear the entire work:

https://youtu.be/xl1PRuuOVn0?si=ZU_f2mXXwYSXfglh

About:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dichterliebe>

Translation:

<https://oxfordsong.org/song/dichterliebe>

5.



Mignon by William Bouguereau

It is not really possible to hear 19th century opera performances, but it is quite possible to hear how opera was sung in the 19th century. Here is an example by one Irene Abendroth, a Polish coloratura soprano who, at 17, became a member of the Vienna Court Opera in 1889(!). Ms. Abendroth went on to sing in various European cities, culminating with the Royal Opera in Dresden (1899-1908.) Her style? Lyric, emphasis on exactitude of technique. Ms. Abendroth was actually born in Lemberg, Austria (now Lviv, Ukraine), studied in Milan and Vienna before debuting in concert in Karlsbad in 1888. She became quite the opera star, but exchanged singing for teaching in 1910, after marrying an Austrian railroad manager. Bad decision? Post World War I inflation wiped out their finances, and Ms. Abendroth died in 1932, poor and living with relatives. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. Operatic, you might say. Here she is with a very charming performance of "Je suis Titania," from "Mignon," by Ambroise Thomas.

<https://youtu.be/iXEwcMR3-e4?si=F9u9SsH7b9ZZYOI5>

Setting: a park in a German castle, late 1700s.

Synopsis: Philine has finished her show, "A Midsummer Night's Dream", and declares that she loves playing Titania, the fairy queen.

Translation:

*Je suis Titania la blonde,
Je suis Titania, fille de l'air,
En riant je parcours le monde,
Plus vive que l'oiseau,
Plus prompte que l'Éclair!
La troupe folle des lutins*

*Suit mon char qui vole et dans la nuit
Fuit!*

Autour de moi toute ma cour

Court,

Chantant le plaisir et l'amour.

La troupe folle des lutins

Suit mon char qui vole et dans la nuit

Fuit,

Au rayon de Phoebe qui luit!

Parmi les fleurs que l'aurore

Fait Éclorre,

Par les bois et par les prairies

Diapraies,

Sur les flots couverts d'écume,

Dans la brume,

On me voit d'un pied léger

Voltiger!

ENGLISH:

English

I am Titania the blonde,

I am Titania, daughter of the air,

Laughing I travel the world,

Livelier than the bird,

Quicker than lightning!

The crazy troop of elves

Follows my chariot that flies and into the night

Flee!

Around me all my court

Short,

Singing of pleasure and love.

The crazy troop of elves

Follows my chariot that flies and into the night

Flee,

In the ray of Phoebe which shines!

Among the flowers that dawn

Makes it hatch,

Through the woods and through the meadows

Diapers,

On the waves covered with foam,

In the fog,

People see me with a light foot

Fly!

6.



DiGiulio

Good God. Sputter, sputter. No, I don't think I'm over-selling this. I'm just about staggered by this excerpt from "Aida." Overwhelming. Wow. They talk about Callas inhabiting a role? Who could sing "O Patria Mia" with more reality, more depth of emotion (without self-conscious "emoting"), more technical perfection and gorgeousness than the forgotten soprano, Germana Di Giulio? Geese will bump, tear ducts fill. Wow again. Who was she? I had to hunt around to find that she, like Bruna Castagna and Sylvia Sass (see previous posts), retired early! In her case, as with Sass, it was after a marriage (to a banker.) She started when she was almost 30, and retired 20 years later in 1958. Just listen to this. . .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oypqUB9fAE>

And, if you would like to read about her, someone kindly (miraculously) posted a scanned interview from a book, "The Last of the Prima Donnas," here:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=2150858654983208&set=pcb.2150860758316331>

EXCERPT:

"When I first entered the operatic gates, the system was different, and far more sensible. Nowadays teachers give lessons that last forty minutes each, and are paid accordingly. Previously a student made a contract with the instructor for a minimum of four years, and all the necessary time was allotted to him. The identification of the teacher with the voice he must train is completely nonexistent now. What is forty minutes two or three times a week? A drop in the ocean. It takes a lot of patience, willpower, exercise to learn how to compose legatos and polish one's tones. . . The legato is the base, and one must learn to use it even when there is portamento---a delay on certain notes or words in order to obtain more pathos or passion."

Setting: The banks of the Nile.

Synopsis: It is the eve of Amneris' wedding to Radames and Aida has come to the banks of the Nile near the temple to meet Radames. She mourns her homeland, which she will never see again.

Translation:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=6>

7.

Forgotten soprano Germana di Giulio should not be forgotten, that's for sure. Here she is again (see post #6), pouring her heart into Mascagni's verismo favorite, "Cavalleria Rusticana." This is "Voi lo sapete," in which Santuzza weeps to her mother that her great love, Turiddu, has been stolen from her. Tour de force.

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

Synopsis:

Santuzza tells Mamma Lucia that when her son left to join the Army, he promised to marry Lola. When he came back, however, Lola had married someone else. So, he fell in love with Santuzza, which made Lola so jealous that she has stolen him away.

TRANSLATION:

https://www.aria-database.com/translations/cavrusti03_voi.txt

8.



Alchevsky

Might as well have a token male forgotten singer or two today. . .Here is one Ivan Alchevsky, who was a great star in Russia, Europe, and also sang some in the USA. His story is a moving and tragic one, and, as we like to say here at SOL, "operatic." The poor fellow grew up in a distinguished and prosperous family, what with his father a famed banker, his mother a respected teacher, and sister a poet of repute. It all collapsed with his father's failed business and financial ruin, capped by suicide. This drove young Alchevsky into chronic depression, yet it was somehow coupled with a determination to succeed as a vocalist. And that he did, quitting a study of science at university in order to help support his mother and sister by singing. In 1901 he was accepted at the Mariinsky Opera. A happy ending? Hardly. Alchevsky was dogged by the Black Dog and his continued steely determination, culminating in massive overwork on a concert tour that left him dead at age 40 from heart failure. And we think we've got it tough? (For more, please see his bio underneath the video.) Not surprisingly, the man specialized in Russian repertory, which should not be off-putting to you, the patient listener who prefers German and Italian fare. Why? Simply because he is here singing a big Amurrikum hit record, that's why! I refer to "Song of India," the melody of which was used for the tune, "Beautiful Ohio," and then became a jazz standard,

courtesy of Tommy Dorsey and Paul Whitman. Here is the original, "Song of the India Guest," from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, "Sadko."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmOgD9lcMIM>

TRANSLATION:

<https://www.opera-arias.com/rimsky-korsakov/sadko/song-of-india/>

About the opera:

<https://interlude.hk/the-fortunate-fisherman-rimsky-korsakov-sadko/>

ANNNNND. . .

Just for the sake of a better quality recording, here is the great Sergei Lemshev:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-CJBYmPGIs>

Dorsey:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZIx6NCCeLg>

9.



Maynor

During the days of accepted racial discrimination, opera stages were forbidden to the likes of enormously talented singers such as Dorothy Maynor, who was African-American. She did, however, sing regularly on radio and in concert halls all over the U.S., Europe, and South America, and was renowned and loved. In 1949, President Harry Truman invited her to sing at his inauguration, followed by another appearance at President Dwight Eisenhower's inauguration in 1953. She is best known for having founded the Harlem School of the Arts, still going strong. It is unfair to say that she is forgotten, but she suffered a far worse fate in that she never had a chance to have an operatic career to be remembered. Here she is with a delicate rendering of "Depuis Le Jour," from "Louise," by Charpentier, in a 1940 recording with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxYn6GBIcZM>

Setting: a small garden next to the Montmartre, Paris, 1900.

Synopsis: Louise describes how her life has changed since moving in with Julien. She revels in his love for her and her life which grows better every day.

TRANSLATION:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=1203>

About the Harlem School of the Arts:

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

FINAL BOW:



Onegin

Well, well. A drinking song in an 1833 Donizetti opera called "Lucrezia Borgia?" Talk about black humor, eh? (The fact that this scene happens in the palace of one Princess Negroni is sheer coincidence, by the way; the drink was not invented until 1919.) The forgotten vocalist, Sigrd Onegin, was a wonderful contralto, quite successful in the '20's and '30's, including two seasons at the Met. She adopted the surname, "Onegin," in tribute to Pushkin's great hero of the same name. We are lucky to have a few recordings by her, including this one of "Il segreto," the brindisi (drinking song), from "Lucrezia Borgia," which, yes, was written for contralto. And if you suspect the drinks consumed in this happy moment have more intoxicants in them than alcohol, you are very canny.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r40Ed9WrVBA>

Synopsis:

Ignoring Lucrezia's advice, Gennaro attends a party at the palace, swearing never to be parted from his friend, Orsini. Orsini leads the party in a brindisi or drinking song ("Il segreto per esser felici") and they drink. Orsini sings that the secret to happiness is to spend as much time as possible drinking and partying. Lucrezia enters and announces that in revenge for their insults in Venice she has poisoned their wine and arranged five coffins for their bodies. Whoops!

Translation:

https://bpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.ucsc.edu/dist/0/689/files/2018/09/07_segreto_esser_felici-1su9hgz.pdf?

And for those wishing to sing along:

<https://theoperadatabase.com/PDFs/Donizetti/Contralto/Il%20segreto%20per%20esser%20felici.pdf?>

ANNND. . .

Here's another little drinking song.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rzTuh202fA>

And another. . .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFqZhadwvG0>



Stage design for "Sadko," by Rimsky-Korsakov.



LUCREZIA BORGIA

DRAMA I 7 AKTER FRA DEN ROMERSKE FORFALDSPERIODE

CONRAD VEIDT - LIANE HAID

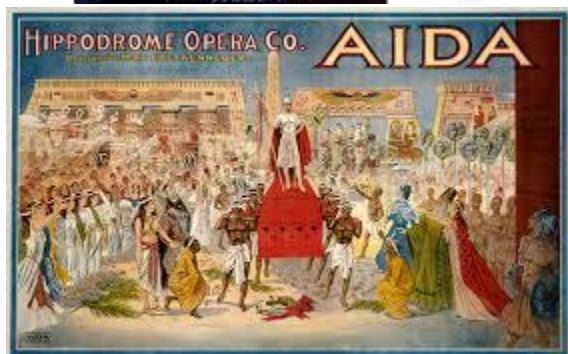
- ALBERT BASSERMANN -

OFFICIN: RICHARD OSWALD · FILM: ENERET FOR DANMARK, $\frac{1}{5}$ KINOGRAFEN

VILH SØBORG S. EFTF. STORMGADE 8



"Sadko," by Ilya Repin.



Pietro Mascagni

Cavalleria Rusticana



TEATRO COSTANZI

PRIMA RAPPRESENTAZIONE ASSOLUTA

sabato 17 maggio 1890 ore 8 1/2

Regia: Leopoldo Mugnone

Personaggi: Santuzza - Emma Bellincioni, Turiddu - Roberto Stagno, Lello - Annetta Gelli, Alfio - Gaetano Salvo, Mamma Lucia - Federica Casali