

SOL HEARTBREAK EDITION/ RIP RENSE

Saturdee Opry Links' Heartbreak Edition is here for you to ignore. Bring tissues.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MILKTKd5pgs>

Saturdee Opry Links Overture

Prelude to act one of "Edgar," by Puccini.

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



Angela Gheorghiu



Thomas Hampson



Zinka Milanov



Barry Morell



Premysl Kocí



Jonas Kaufmann & friends



Barbara Fritolli

1.

Puccini's second opera, "Edgar" (1889), is not often performed, owing to its ponderous storyline---one that even Puccini ultimately condemned. As he wrote:

"Although I knew that I wrote some pages which do me credit, that is not enough---as an opera it does not exist. The basis of an opera is the subject and its treatment. In setting the libretto of Edgar I have, with all respect to the memory of my friend Fontana, made a blunder."

It's a pity, of course, as he expended so much effort and energy on this poorly received, sprawling, four-act epic depicting a medieval knight's struggle between a life of sensual indulgence and ideal love.

(Anyone for "Tannhauser?") Still, as the composer said, there are "some pages" that do him credit. Here is one example, the "big baritone aria" from the opera, "Questo amor, vergogna mia." Understated Puccini---will wonders never cease? It is so subtle, in fact, that Youtube features nothing but unheard of and lesser known tenors singing it. Here is the formidable Renzo (no relation) Scorsoni.

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

Setting: the main square of a Flemish village at dawn in April, late 19th century.

Synopsis: Frank looks at Tigrana from afar and sings of his love for her. He has grown up with her and loves her very much, but she does not return the love and, in fact, thinks that being Frank's lover would be sinful since they are almost like brother and sister.

Translation:

Chi detto a me l'avrebbe mai che un giorno

Costei sarebbe stata

L'affanno piÃ¹ crudel della mia vita?...

Son quindici anni d'Ungari e Morischi

Un'errabonda schiera

Nel villaggio passÃ², qui una bambina

Abbandonando... Era Tigrana!... Crebbe

Figlia di tutti... AimÃ², sul nostro seno

La vipera scaldammo!

Questo amor, vergogna mia,

Io spezzar, scordar vorrei;

Ma d'un' orrida malÃ²-a

Sono schiavi i sensi miei...

Mille volte al ciel giurai

Di fuggirla!... E a lei tornai!

Ella ride del mio pianto,

Del mio sdegno si fa scherno;

Ed io, vil, col cuore infranto,

Ai suoi piedi mi prosterno...

E lei sola io sogno, io bramo!

Ah sventura!... Io l'amo!... Io l'amo!

ENGLISH:

Who told me that one day would happen

She would have been

The cruelest worry of my life?...

It's fifteen years of Hungarians and Morischi

*A wandering crowd
 In the village passed, here a little girl
 Abandoning... It was Tigrana!... It grew
 Daughter of all... Alas, on our breasts
 We warmed the viper!
 This love, my shame,
 I would like to break, forget;
 But of a horrid evil
 My senses are slaves...
 A thousand times I swore to heaven
 To escape from her!... And I returned to her!
 She laughs at my tears,
 My indignation is mocked;
 And I, vile, with a broken heart,
 At his feet I prostrate myself...
 And she alone I dream, I long for!
 Ah, misfortune!... I love her!... I love her!*

About Mr. Sardinero:

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

2.



The arias in Puccini's "Edgar" show signs of great lyricism to come in his later operas, though most seem more beholden to mechanical plot advance than inspired writing. Here is an exception, "Addio, mio dolce amor," as sung rather incomparably by Angela Gheorghiu. This is incipient Puccini greatness, foreshadowing glorious moments in "Manon Lescaut," "La Bohème," "Madama Butterfly."

Setting: the front of a fortress, Courtray, Flanders, late 19th century.

Synopsis: Fidelia believes that Edgar has died as a great hero in battle. At his funeral, she sings farewell to her one true love, asking him to wait for her in Heaven.

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

Translation:

*Addio, addio mio dolce amor!
Nell'ombra ove discendi,
Solenne, infinita anch'io verrÃ²...
M'attendi!
Dove tu regni dolor,
La gioventÃ¹ non ha piÃ¹ fior!
Addio ancora, addio, o Edgar,
La tua memoria sarÃ²
Il mio sol pensiero!
LassÃ¹, nella tua gloria,
M'attendi, Edgar!*

ENGLISH:

*Goodbye, goodbye my sweet love!
In the shadow where you descend,
Solemn, infinite I too will come...
Wait for me!
Where you reign pain,
Youth no longer has any flower!
Goodbye again, goodbye, oh Edgar,
Your memory will be
My only thought!
Up there, in your glory,
Wait for me, Edgar!*

3.

Verdi's operas explore many kinds of relationships, not the least of which are friendships between men. In today's insane "woke" culture, one can't bring up the subject of male friendships without winking, asinine comments about "bromance" and repressed homosexuality. To which I can only respond with. . .*ptui!* Here are two examples of Verdi's presentation of steadfast, even noble, camaraderie and bonhomie among heterosexual (yes, such creatures exist) males. First, from his epic, five-act opera, *Don Carlo*, there is the duet where Carlo, heir to the throne, and one visiting marquis, Rodrigue, swear allegiance to one another, and to the cause of liberty. This is the duet, "Dio che nell'alma infondere," or "Oh, God, who wishes to instill. . .") from act one, with tenor Jonas Kaufmann and baritone Thomas Hampson:

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

Translation:

https://memory-alpha.fandom.com/wiki/Dio,_che_nell%27alma_infondere?

And here is example number two, from Verdi's "*La Forza del Destino*." Follow this: Don Alvaro is in love with Leonora, daughter of the Marquis of Calatrava. The Marquis disapproves, and during an argument, a gun accidentally fires, killing the Marquis. Alvaro is blamed. Later, Alvaro and one Don Carlo (no relation to the opera of the same name) become great friends and comrades-in-arms during the Battle of Velletri. Alvaro does not know that Carlo is Leonora's brother, hell-bent on avenging the death of

their father. Later, Alvaro is gravely wounded, and pleads with Carlo to burn a cache of letters without reading them. (Of course, he later does, and realizes Alvaro is the alleged killer, which causes him great grief, seeing as they are friends. No, the opera does not end happily.) This is the scene where Alvaro asks Carlo's help, "Solenne in quest'ora, giurarmi dovete far pago un mio voto" – "You must swear to me in this solemn hour, to carry out my wish." This is a great old clip with baritone Ettore Bastianini and tenor Franco Corelli.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kk3AvVJo50Q>

Translation, plus many other versions of the duet:

<https://medicine-opera.com/2019/04/solenne-in-questora/>

4.



We now return to early Puccini, as late Verdi is just too damned hard to summarize. This is a terrific tenor aria from his first opera, "Le Villi," sung here by one Barry Morell. The title translation: "Bring back the happy days." *Oh boy oh gollygosh*, does SOL identify with this sentiment! Yes, bring 'em back! Now! I don't like this lunatic asylum century! If SOL could sing this, he would open the windows right now and assault the neighborhood! Lucky Barry Morell, to have been able to give such golden tones to this universal utterance! What? Too many exclamation marks? No, I think not. When one is running out of time, one can't exclaim enough. Sing it, Barry! And why are you so forgotten today, with such a fabulous voice? Even his NYT obit (see below) is too damned short. Exclamation point.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rM3HpWsZpSc>

Synopsis : Anna has been killed by fairies that were conjured by a witch who seduced Roberto when he was away in Mainz. Roberto is filled with remorse at letting himself be seduced by another woman and is shocked to find out then that his true love is now dead at the hand of the same witch.

TRANSLATION:

Ecco la casa Dio, che orrenda notte!

Strane voci m'inseguon

Le Villi...Evviva! Son fole!

No, delle Villi me non perseguita la vendetta fatale!

Tu sol m'insegui, rimorso!

Vipera infernal!

Tu sol m'insegui, rimorso!

Vipera dal velno infernal!

Torna ai felici di dolente il mio pensier,

Ridean del maggio i fior, fioria per me l'amor.

*Or tutto si coprì di mister...
Ed io non ho nel cor che tristezza e terror,
Forse ella vive! Bussiam!
Qual brivido mi colse!
Invan di quella soglia tentai
Sul limite levar la man!
Pur d'intender parmi davvero un canto lugubre!
O sommo Iddio! Del mio cammino,
O sommo Iddio, del mio destin quest'è la meta...
Fa che il perdono, fa che il perdon
La renda lieta un solo istante e poi morirò!
Pregar non posso! Ah, maledetto il dì
Che andai lontan di qui!
Maledetta sia la tua bellezza, o cortigiana vil...
Maledetta in eterno! Maledetta!*

ENGLISH:

*Return to those happy days
When May was gay with flowers
And love blossomed for me!
Then everything was blackened
By lugubrious mysteries,
And now in my heart there is
Naught but sadness and terror!
Perhaps she still lives!
(he looks at Anna's house, hesitates, then walks towards it)
I shall knock!
(about to knock, he steps back as though restrained by some mysterious force)
What a shudder ran through me!
I could not lift
My hand to her door!
About Barry Morell:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/08/arts/barry-morell-75-tenor-partial-to-puccini-dies.html?>*

(more)

Saturdee Opry Links EXTRA!



How important is breathing in singing? Kiri te Kanawa demonstrates, and the results are remarkable. Operatic singing is just so complex, so full of nuance of technique. Here she teaches a young baritone singing "Questo amor, vergogna mia" from Puccini's "Edgar." (See SOL post # 1.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUZY8P0jOGQ>

5.

Neil Kurtzman, who knows a universe more about opera than SOL, says that Zinka Milanov had "the most beautiful voice in the world." Period, no qualifications. Well, such statements---even from scholars such as Kurtzman---are hyperbolic, yet should not be dismissed. In the end, after all, there is a joker in the deck called "personal taste." That aside, you may judge whether Kurtzman was over the top, or astute, in his appraisal of Milanov---a Croatian soprano who joined the Met in 1937 and stayed through 1966(!). One of her signature roles was as Leonora in Verdi's "Il Trovatore," and here is an example recommended by Kurtzman---a 1951 recording of "D'amor sull'ali rosee," or "On the rosy wings of love." Setting: A hall in the palace of Aliferia, Aragon, 1409.

Synopsis: Manrico has been captured in an attempt to save his mother from being executed for witchcraft, and is now being held in prison by the Count of Luna. Leonora has come to the prison in disguise in order to see him. She hopes that he will be sustained by her love for him.

<https://medicine-opera.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/milanov-damor6.mp3?>

For comparison, here is Leontyne Price:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_saA1rRxUP8

About Milanov:

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

(more)

6.



Heartbroken Vodnik

Everyone loves the "Song to the Moon" from Dvorak's "Rusalka," which, in SOL's crackpot opinion, takes more than one cue from Puccini's "Se come voi piccina" in "Le Villi." But that's fine---all composers lifted from all composers. Well, all of "Rusalka" is compelling, start to finish. It's a fine work, full of other-worldly atmosphere and memorable melody. Recommended! Here is a very poignant moment from roughly the middle of the opera, where the water-sprite's father, Vodnik (ruler of the lake where she lived) appears at a party given by humans. He sees his daughter in human form, having exchanged her sprite-ness through witchcraft, with the condition that she be mute. Vodnik is horrified, and sings "Beda! Beda!" ("Alas! Alas!") in a soliloquy mourning his daughter's fateful succumbing to temptation. This is from the Peter Weigl film of the opera, in 1977, with Magda Vášáryová as Rusalka and Premysl Kocí as Vodnik. Start at 1:02:18. With English subtitles!

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

For those wishing to read along instead:

(Search for the fourth "Ubohá Rusalka" and start there):

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

Or a studio recording might be to your liking, with Rene Pape:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3n3T9IN4WA>

7.

I would say that there is no sadder opera in the repertory than "Iris," by Mascagni. Perhaps that is one reason that it is (unjustly) seldom performed today, as the music is excellent. Puccini's "Suor Angelica," however, is right there in the running, with an ending that is deeply heart-rending (not "heart-wrenching," morons), yet tinged with a kind of comforting resolution as well. (As is, thankfully, "Iris.") The story of this one-act, one-hour opera, in essence, is that Sister Angelica, the daughter of a noble Florentine family, has taken the vow in order to atone for her sin: an illicit affair in her youth which yielded an illegitimate son. Seven years have passed during which Angelica the nun has become a specialist in herbal medicine---though she is thoroughly unable to forget her son. One day, her older sister, a priggish princess, comes to visit. The Princess coldly rejects Angelica's happiness upon seeing her, and explains that 20 years prior, she was given control over the family inheritance. The reason for the visit? Angelica must sign a document transferring her share of inheritance to a younger sister, who is marrying a man willing to ignore the shame Angelica has brought on the family. Angelica refuses, averring that she has repented of her sin and will not jeopardize the inheritance due her son. The

Princess finally tells Sister Angelica that little boy died of fever 2 years before. Devastated, Angelica signs the document transferring her inheritance, and collapses. In time, she is seized by a vision, believing that she hears the boy calling for her to meet him in paradise. She brews an herbal poison and drinks it---but suddenly realizes that by killing herself, she has committed a mortal sin and thus has damned herself to eternal separation from her son! Angelica pleads with the Virgin Mary for mercy and, as she dies, the Virgin appears along with the little boy, who runs to embrace his mother. Whether this is literal or a product of delirium is up to the audience. Here is the entire beautiful opera, but if you prefer to watch only the final sequence, including the signature aria, "Senza Mamma," start at 39:10. If you just wish to see the final sequence, start at 48:00. Bring tissues. The soprano is Barbara Frittoli.

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

Translation, "Senza Mamma:"

https://www.aria-database.com/translations/angelica01_senza.txt

8.



Scene from *La bohème* at the [Théâtre de la Renaissance](#) in Paris on 10 October 1899

If there is a more poignant story than "La Bohème," it's splitting hairs. But wait---I didn't say opera, I said story. And that story was famously adapted by two composers: Puccini and Leoncavallo. ¿*Quien Es Mas Macho*? Why, Puccini, of course---his "Bohème" is duly loved for its runaway genius musical illustration of character and drama. Small wonder it is the most popular opera in the world, if you're keeping score at home. But if there had been no Puccini "Bohème," it's a good bet that Leoncavallo's far more overtly anguished sounding "Bohème" would be in standard repertory today, instead of reduced to a curiosity. Here is the premiere aria from the "other Bohème," "Testa Adorata," which awkwardly translates to "adored head." Two versions are offered: first by Jonas Kaufmann, and then by, you guessed it, Mario Lanza.

Synopsis:

October, 1838; in Marcello's attic room. Marcello and Rodolfo are attempting to find work to raise some money, but are unsuccessful. The happy bohemian life is turning into a very serious one of deprivation and anguish. Musetta decides to leave Marcello for a rich guy, and although Mimì tries to reconcile herself to Rodolfo, she is angrily rebuffed by him out of jealousy. The two men are left alone, hungry, bitter and resentful, forlorn. In a heartbreaking aria, "Testa adorata," Marcello weeps for his loss.

Kaufmann:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhV0F-u5-UE>

Lanza:

<https://medicine-opera.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/La-Boheme-Testa-Adorata-Lanza.mp3>

Translation:

*Testa adorata, più non tornerai
lieta sul mio guanciale a riposar!
Bianche manine ch'io sul cor scaldai,
più il labbro mio non vi potrà baciare!
Gaie canzoni de' giorni d'amore,
la vostra eco lontana già fuggì.
La stanza è muta e il vedovo mio core
piange nel tedio quei perduti dì!*

ENGLISH:

*Beloved head, you'll never come back
to rest happily on my pillow!
Little white hands that I warmed on my heart,
my lips will never be able to kiss you again!
Cheerful songs of the days of love,
your echo has already fled far away.
My room is silent, and in this tedium
my widowed heart mourns those lost days!*

About the opera:

<https://medicine-opera.com/2015/06/leoncavallos-la-boheme/>

9.



In the original David Belasco play, "Madame Butterfly," poor Cio-Cio San waits silently with her little boy, all through a long night, for the arrival by ship of her beloved Pinkerton, also the boy's father. When Puccini saw the play, which featured a protracted silent sequence of Butterfly and child waiting, he knew what to do with that scene in the opera. And so today we have the "Humming Chorus" sequence in "Madama Butterfly." Cio-Cio San and son sit silently, as the stars swirl overhead and the moon rises and sets---to the accompaniment of a tender song hummed by local villagers. Magic! Poignancy can be subtle! Here are two very moving examples, one from the brilliant Anthony Minghella production,

featuring a bunraku puppet as the child, and another with touching scenes of old Japan from the film version of the opera, directed by Frédéric Mitterrand.

1. Film version (start at 1:40:10):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3stgof-xyN0>

2. The Minghella production:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFOzgNlg0dg>

FINAL BOW:

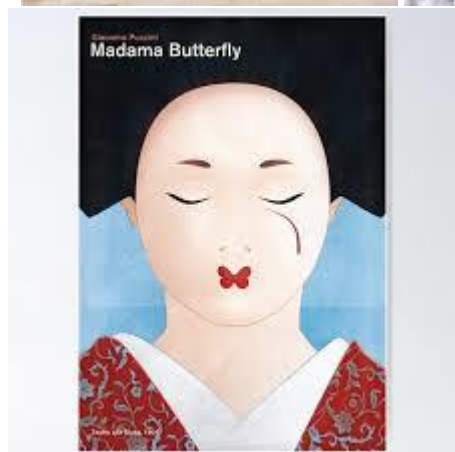
Today's Heartbreak Edition of Saturdee Opry Links concludes with the shattering end of Puccini's "La Boheme," beginning with the aria, "Sono Andati" ("Have they gone?"), sung by Mimi as she is dying from tuberculosis. She and Rodolfo, long separated, have been reunited by their friend, Musetta, who found Mimi in despair, desperately ill, and brought her to Rodolfo's garret. The two former lovers recall their meeting, how cold her hand was when he first touched it, the bonnet she wore. . . This is Mirella Freni, the definitive Mimi, and Gianni Raimondi. You are free to watch to the end, if you can. It's rough. With English subtitles.

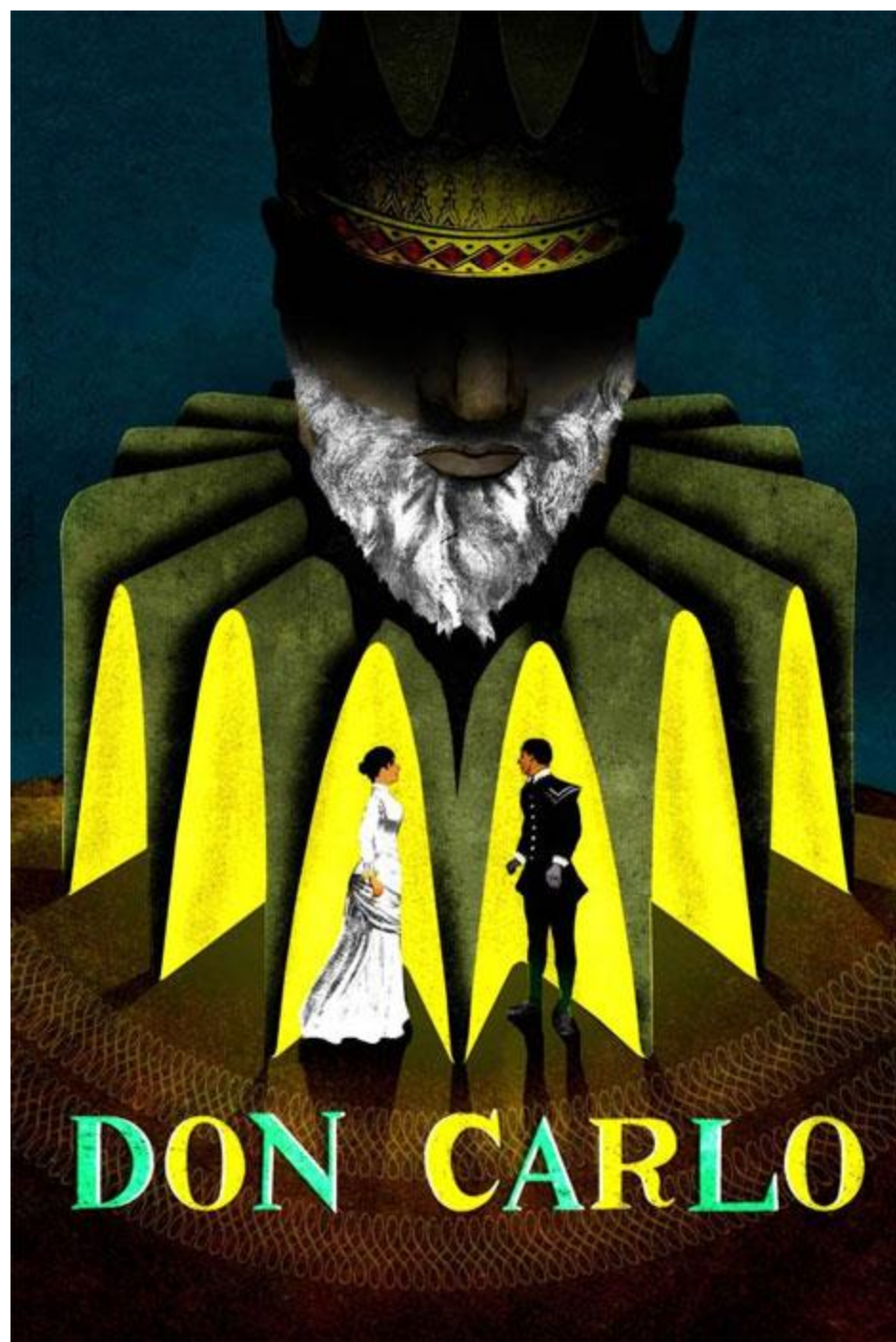
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgSdozWF_B8

(start at 1:32:00)



Vodnik and water sprites in Dvorak's "Rusalka."







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