

## Saturdee Opry Links/ Rip Rense

*Saturdee Opry Links' quasi-Memorial Day Edition is posted for you to ignore. Ten selections (plus overture and extra), half of them on the holiday-light side, and the other half on the holiday-heavy side.*

### Saturdee Opry Links Overture.

For Memorial Day, we begin with a general. "Giulio Cesare," by Handel.

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



Caesar



Cleopatra (see link # 1)



Danielle De Niese



Beverly Sills

## 1.

For the hell of it, SOL is starting off by going for baroque. In George Frederick Handel's 1724 opera, "Giulio Cesare," the title role was sung by a castrato, as was the penchant of the time. Ouch. And you thought Abraham Lincoln was the only head of a nation with a high, squeaky voice. You may read the incredibly complicated plot here, if you like:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giulio\\_Cesare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giulio_Cesare)

Meanwhile, here is the aria, "Da tempeste il legno infranto," or "Your leg is a tempestuous infant." Okay, not really. "The wood is broken by storms." Although this is Queen Cleopatra's aria, for some bizarre reason, it is here sung marvelously by a gay moustachioed counter-tenor named Mayaan Licht. Well, one queen plays another, I guess. By the way, I think the current spate of counter-tenors in the world is the result of hormone-mimicking PCB-poisoned environment. Unless someone has secretly brought back castration.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AD1AXqnUluA>

OR, if you'd prefer to see it sung by a soprano. . .

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

(Frankly, I don't like either of them, as this operatic style generally bores and irritates the rube, SOL. But never say we are not aesthetically "inclusive," at least giving an example of this genre. Enjoy!)

Setting: Cleopatra's room, Alexandria, Egypt, 48 B.C.

Synopsis: Just before Cleopatra leaves to go to prison, Caesar breaks into her apartments and liberates her from the clutches of Cleopatra's wicked brother, Tolomeo. In jubilation, she anticipates the victory that is sure to follow.

TRANSLATION:

*Da tempeste il legno infranto,  
se poi salvo giunge in porto,  
non sa pi  che desiar.  
Cos  il cor tra pene e pianto,  
or che trova il suo conforto,  
torna l'anima a bear.*

ENGLISH:

*The wood is broken by storms,  
if it then reaches port safely,  
he no longer knows what to desire.  
Thus the heart between pain and tears,  
now that he finds his comfort,  
the soul returns to bear.*

## 2.

Okay, our token concession to baroque opera discharged, we move on to more alluring fare. How did Donizetti do it? How did he crank out winning opera after winning opera, especially considering that his health declined from the syphilis that felled him in 1848 at only 51? If you're keeping score at home, the man cranked out 75 operas, 16 symphonies, 19 string quartets, 193 songs, 45 duets, 3 oratorios, 28 cantatas, instrumental concertos, sonatas, and other chamber pieces. And many of the operas are still in

repertory today. Here, from the ticklish farce, "Don Pasquale," is a glorious little duet, "Tornami a dir che m'ami," from act three. "Tell me that you love me again." With English subtitles. The singers are Danielle de Niese and Alek Shrader.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bowP8N\\_zL\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bowP8N_zL_w)

Synopsis:

Act 3: In the garden, as night draws in, Ernesto sings of his love for Norina, as he waits for her arrival (Com'è gentil – "How lovely"). At last, Norina emerges, and they express their love: (Tornami a dir che m'ami – "Tell me once more that you love me").

Or, if you prefer. . .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5CqQx88Kws>

### 3.



**Sills**

Today is the 95th anniversary of the birth of wonderful coloratura soprano Beverly Sills. You know the story: the NYT critic, Peter Davis, had it in for Sills, year after year, and this dogged and impeded her career. Couple that with Met Director Rudolf Bing's strange (snobby?) aversion to hiring this "local girl," and, quite incredibly, most of her career triumphs were with the lesser New York City Opera. By the time she debuted at the Met (after Bing retired) in 1975, her vocal powers had considerably lessened. Belle Miriam Silverman of Brooklyn was a great lady, and a great soprano, and it is the art, not the art critic, that is remembered today. It is well known that the woman was burdened with two severely disabled children throughout her career, and that her love and dedication to them were as ardent, somehow, as was her dedication to opera. She retired in 1979 to head the NYC Opera, her comment at the time: "My voice had a long, nonstop career. It deserves to be put to bed with quiet and dignity, not yanked out every once in a while to see if it can still do what it used to do. It can't." Here she is when it could, with "Ô beau pays de la Touraine," or "O beautiful province of Touraine," from "Les Huguenots," by Meyerbeer. Exactly what is going on here, I dunno, other than. . . In the gardens at the Château de Chenonceaux, Queen Marguerite looks into a mirror held by her enamored page, Urbain, and sings.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BXist62Qp0>

Translation:

<https://lyricstranslate.com/en/%C3%B4-beau-pays-de-la-touraine-oh-beautiful-region-touraine.html>

All about the Sills "controversy:"

<https://blogs.cul.columbia.edu/rbml/2023/07/14/two-operatic-controversies-and-what-they-tell-us-about-the-relationship-between-the-arts-and-the-media-in-the-united-states/>

#### **SOL EXTRA!**

Beverly Sills at age eight! With the standard, "Il Bacio," by Luigi Artiti.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAz2HgSZaDs>

Translation:

[https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=81](https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=81)

#### **4.**



Keeping things holiday-light, at least for now, SOL turns to the delightful operetta, "Die Fledermaus," by Johann Strauss II. From act three of this fizzy farce, here is "Spiel ich die Unschuld vom Lande," ("When I play the innocent from the country.") The soprano is Edita Gruberova. You might say she is at bat. You might not.

Synopsis:

The next morning they all find themselves at the prison where the confusion increases and is compounded by the jailer, Frosch, who has profited by Warden Frank's absence to become gloriously drunk. Alfred, still in jail in Eisenstein's place, irritates the other prisoners by singing operatic arias. Adele arrives to ask the Chevalier Chagrin (actually Frank) to sponsor her career as an actress, but Frank is not wealthy enough to do this (Melodrama; Couplet of Adele: "Spiel' ich die Unschuld vom Lande"/"If I play the innocent peasant maid").

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ao8C2aZCkHw>

Translation:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=504>

ANNND, if that was not comedy enough for you, here are Beverly Sills (19:40) Kitty Carlisle (7:44) and Carol Burnett (32:05) from a Met gala in 1980.

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

5.

Of the myriad drinking songs in opera, nothing is frothier, bubblier than the "Champagne song" from Strauss's "Der Fledermaus." This, of course, being the wildly popular 1874 operetta that has become a New Year's Eve perennial. What is it about? Essentially this:

The actress Rosalinde and her husband Eisenstein are in Vienna to celebrate the New Year. At the suggestion of their friend, Dr. Falke, they are staying at the Imperial Hotel. Unbeknownst to both of them, Falke has hired the hotel concierge as part of his revenge plot on Eisenstein, two years in the making. And it gets goofier from there. Here is "Im Feuerstrom der Reben," or "In the fire stream of the vines." The principals are: Count Orlovsky: Malena Ernman (mezzo); Gabriel von Eisenstein: Thomas Allen (baritone);

Adele: Lyubov Petrova (soprano).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFHVkveiKJ0>

Translation:

[https://www.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Champagne\\_Chorus\\_\(Johann\\_Strauss\\_II\)](https://www.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Champagne_Chorus_(Johann_Strauss_II))

ENGLISH:

*In the fire stream of the vines  
radiates a heavenly life.*

*The Kings, the emperors,  
they love laurel shoots,  
but they love besides that  
the sweet juice of the vines  
Toast, toast,  
and pays homage in the club  
the king of all wines,  
the king of all wines.*

*toast,  
toasts,  
toast!*

*The majesty is recognized, recognized throughout the land!  
They are jubilantly called "Champagne the First!"  
The majesty is recognized, recognized throughout the land!  
They are jubilantly called "Champagne the First!"  
Long live Champagne the First!*

*The nations pay homage  
to the most distant zones.  
Champagne sometimes floats  
down in many ways.*

*So wise princes let them go  
the nations never thirst.*

*Toast, toast,  
and pays homage in the club  
the king of all wines,  
the king of all wines.*

toast,  
 toasts,  
 toast!  
 The majesty is recognized, recognized throughout the land!  
 They are jubilantly called "Champagne the First!"  
 The majesty is recognized, recognized throughout the land!  
 They are jubilantly called "Champagne the First!"  
 Long live Champagne the First!  
 The monk in a quiet cell  
 feasts on the source.  
 To wet his lips  
 He has to sip a lot and often  
 and gets himself out of the glass  
 Rubies on the nose.  
 Toast, toast,  
 and pays homage in the club  
 the king of all wines,  
 the king of all wines.  
 toast,  
 toasts,  
 toast!  
 The majesty is recognized, recognized throughout the land!  
 They are jubilantly called "Champagne the First!"  
 The majesty is recognized, recognized throughout the land!  
 They are jubilantly called "Champagne the First!"

6.



Holiday-lite over! Apropos of Memorial Day, here is a famous aria of remembrance, or attempted remembrance, from "Mignon," by Ambroise Thomas, " Connais-tu le pays où fleurit l'oranger?" Or "Do

you remember the land where the orange trees blossomed?" (She might as well be asking about the Southern California of old. . .) Here is Lucile Vignon in a heart-rending performance.

Setting : courtyard of a German Inn, late 1700s

Synopsis: Mignon, stolen from an Italian castle by gypsies as a young girl, tells Wilhelm about her native land, which she knows only in vague memories.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7M\\_PLBkT82s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7M_PLBkT82s)

Translation:

[https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=28121](https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=28121)

ANNND. . .an equally compelling performance by the forgotten French soprano, Ninon Vallin.

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

About the remarkable Ms. Vallin:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninon\\_Vallin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninon_Vallin)

## 7.



**Yoncheva**

The line in this aria, "Non te scordar di me," could not be more apt for Memorial Day: "Do not forget me." Here is the gossamer delicate, almost ethereal aria from Puccini's early opera, "Le Villi" ("The Fairies"), "Se come voi piccina," or "If I were tiny, like you." The soprano is Sonya Yoncheva.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUoIX4uop30>

Setting: A town in the Black Forest during spring.

Synopsis: Anna puts her bouquet from her engagement celebration in Roberto's luggage. He is about to leave to go to Mainz where he has been left a fortune. She hopes that he will think of her when he looks at the flowers.

Translation:

*Se come voi piccina io fossi, o vaghi fior,*

*If I were tiny like you, or a wild flower*

*sempre sempre vicina potrei stare al mio amor.*

*I could always be close to my love*

*Allor dirgli vorrei: "Io penso sempre a te!"*

*Then I would like to tell him: "I'm thinking of you!"*

*Ripetergli potrei: "Non te scordar di me!"*

*I could be able to repeat to him: "Don't forget about me!"*



*Voi, di me... piu felici, lo seguirete, o fior;  
 You, who are happier than me, will follow him, or flowers,  
 per valli e per pendici seguirete il mio amor.  
 in the vallyes and on the slopes, you will follow my love  
 Ah, se il nome che avete menzognero non e,  
 Oh, if the name you have is not lying,  
 deh! al mio amor ripetete: "Non ti scordar di me!"  
 then repeat to my love: "Don't forget about me!"*

8.



**Santoni**



**Young Wolfgang**

In SOL's third of four arias relating to remembrance, here is a minor masterpiece by Mozart, "Ch'io mi scordi di te? ... Non temer, amato bene" ("You ask that I forget you? . . . Fear nothing, my love.") It is one of the composer's standalone arias that were not associated with any of his operas---and also one of his most ambitious such works, composed late in his short life (1786.) It's nothing less than a bit of an involving, touching adventure, with various moods and melodies. (Note the interplay between soprano and solo violin.) Sung here by one Vannina Santoni.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-anTF72upI>

Translation:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%27io\\_mi\\_scordi\\_di\\_te%3F](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%27io_mi_scordi_di_te%3F)

9.



"Do not forget me!" The Ernesto de Curtis song that could easily fit into an opera, but was written for a 1935 Italian movie (of the same name.) Yes, it's become a standard, from Beniamino Gigli to Mario



Lanza to The Three Tenors: "Non Ti Scordar Di Me." Heavy-handed? Overtly sentimental? How can you be too heavy handed or sentimental when singing about death and loss? Mario Lanza knew the answer: you can't.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWI7PlvsXrk>

Translation:

<https://lyricstranslate.com/en/non-ti-scordar-di-me-dont-forget-about-me.html>

#### FINAL BOW:



Here is the ultimate operatic Memorial Day post. There are many operas, of course, dealing with courageous soldiers (male and female) who are killed in battle, but only one that finds them whisked up to heaven on flying horses ridden by goddesses. Yes, this is an opera that is forever cannibalized for movies, car commercials, cartoons---and endlessly mocked, belittled by "popular culture." It is also constantly staged by poseurs, phonies, pseudo-intellectuals and other meddlers---often looking to deliberately debase it and its composer, Richard Wagner. You would not believe the ridiculous, inane, puerile stage treatments this sequence gets. (I mean, necrophilia, anyone? I kid you not.) It was impossible to find a literal staging on Youtube, and almost impossible to find one staged with any respect or dignity at all. But consider: what opera more honors war dead than one depicting their bodies being borne to heaven, where they will be reborn? I can't name one. So here is the "Ride of the

Valkyries" from Wagner's adaptation of Norse myths, represented here with a great painting from 1890 by one William T. Maud, and a concert performance from Norway. For all the men, women, children, animals killed in war.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQM97\\_iNXhk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQM97_iNXhk)

Translation:

(search for "hojotojo")

<https://www.opera-arias.com/wagner/die-walk%C3%BCre/libretto/english/>

German:

*Hojotoho! Hojotoho!*

*Heiaha! Heiaha! Hojotoho! Heiaha!*

*Dir rat' ich, Vater, rüste dich selbst;*

*harten Sturm sollst du bestehn.*

*Fricka naht, deine Frau,*

*im Wagen mit dem Widdergespann.*

*Hei! Wie die goldne Geißel sie schwingt!*

*Die armen Tiere ächzen vor Angst;*

*wild rasseln die Räder;*

*zornig fährt sie zum Zank!*

*In solchem Strauße streit' ich nicht gern,*

*lieb' ich auch mutiger Männer Schlacht!*

*Drum sieh, wie den Sturm du bestehst:*

*ich Lustige laß' dich im Stich!*

*Hojotoho! Hojotoho!*

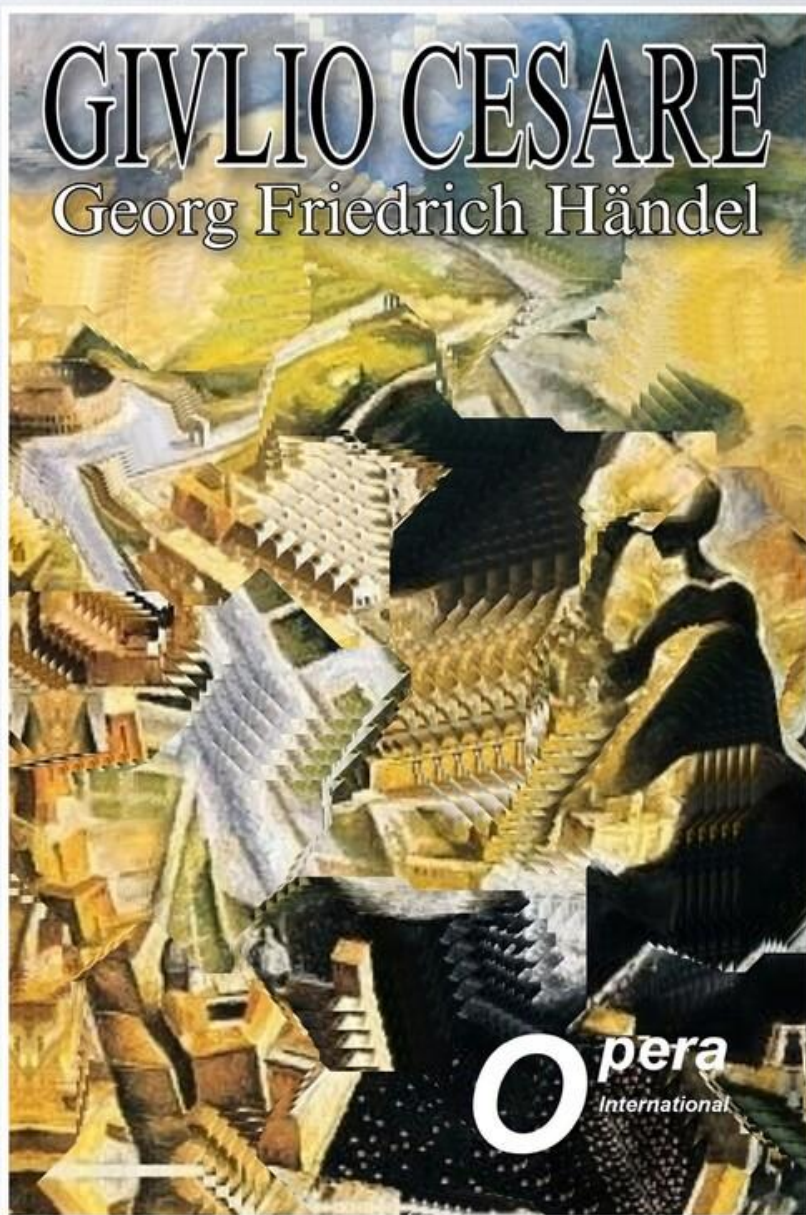
*Heiaha! Heiaha!*

*Heihaha!*



# GIVLIO CESARE

Georg Friedrich Händel



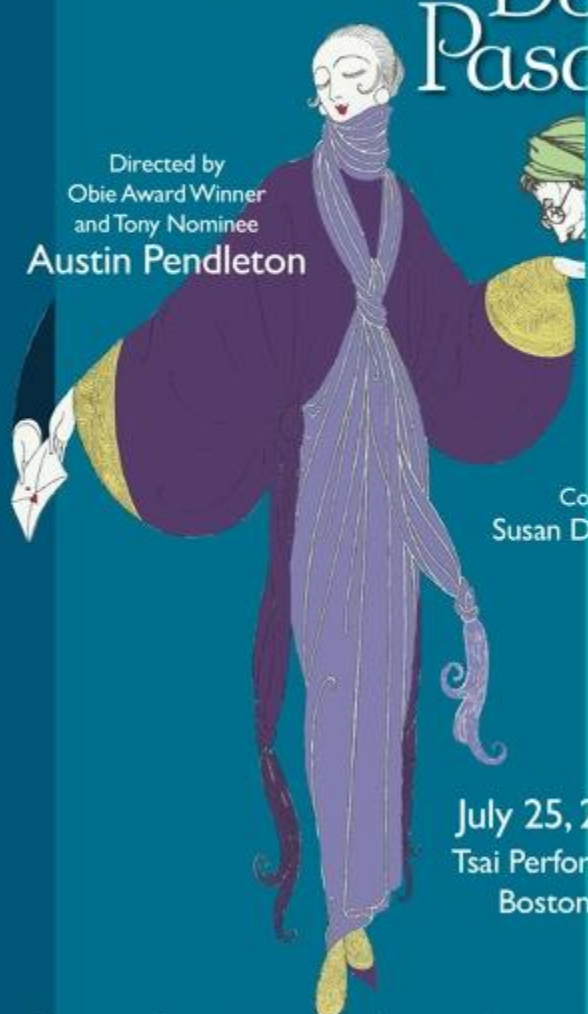
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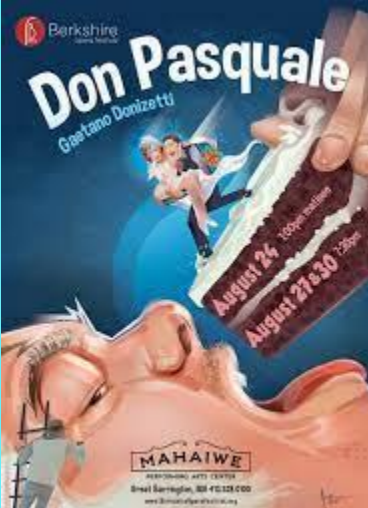
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