

Saturdee Opry Links/ Rip Rense

Saturdee Opry Links' quasi-verismo edition is now posted for you to ignore. Overture, ten somewhat carefully chosen excerpts from transporting works of art, and extras! Fun! Thrills! Tears! Enjoy! Unless you came here for a Biblical cure for toenail fungus, in which case, watch this video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_eCtyA3h6M

Saturdee Opry Links Overture

"Lucio Silla," by sixteen-year-old Mozart. Sprightly, brightly, you can listen to it every nightly!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sukIWVPRa8>

About the opera:

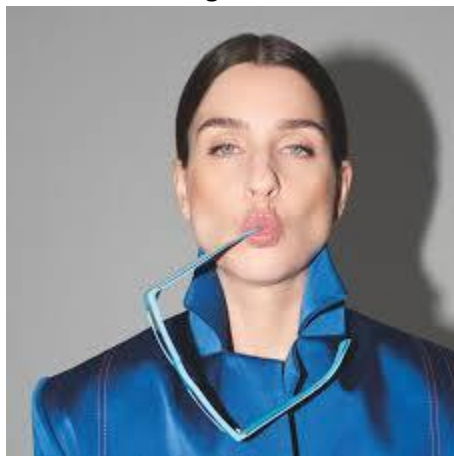
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucio_Silla

Comment from a faithful SOL subscriber:

There is some truth in the opera: Sulla resigned after 2-3 years and then retired to the countryside to write his memoirs and practice debauchery and other hobbies. His family managed to survive his reign and prosper. He had 5 wives, mostly one at a time. He was one of Rome's most enterprising generals. How does a 16 year old pick this theme? Answer: he must have read Plutarch's Life of Sulla.



Magda Olivero



Asmik Gregorian



Lanza charms the ladies



Crazy Joe Devola



Di Stefano

1.

Wonderful Magda Olivero famously made her Met debut in 1975 at the age of, uh, 65! Sixty-five, kids! In "Tosca," no less. . .and AS "Tosca." Gasp. (Yes, she was a hit.) If that is not astonishing enough, consider that the lady had an opera career of 43 years behind her! Olivero was a marvel, yet due to quirks of fate, spent most of her career in smaller, lesser houses---and recorded only two operas in full during her lifetime: "Turandot" (as Liu), in 1938, and the trifle, "Fedora," in 1969. Over the years, she came to be known to admirers as "La Verissima," due to her excelling in verismo (realistic) opera. It was an abiding cult following that helped buoy her career, yet she was all but ignored by the record industry. So any recording of this great lady is a rarity, including this one: the tender, "Donde Lieta Usci" from Puccini's "La Boheme." Close your eyes and open your ears. . .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BlmJ8zoiVU>

Setting: The barrière d'Enfer, on the outskirts of Paris.

Synopsis: Rodolfo and Mimi have had a fight, with Rodolfo saying that Mimi has been flirting with other men. However, the real reason he wants to separate from Mimi is because she is very sick and he cannot bear to watch her die. He reveals this to Marcello, but Mimi overhears him and, after Marcello leaves, she comes to Rodolfo and asks him to return all of her possessions to her former room.

Translation:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=35>

ANND. . .Ms. Olivero passed away just a few years ago, in 2014, at the age of 104. Here is a very moving video of the lady at age 96, her voice still magnificent.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6FNAVs7npM>

And at 99!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZe3TKQxF0s>

Bio:

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

Saturdee Opry Links EXTRA!

A rare recording gem! Magda Olivero in concert, 1962, Amsterdam. (Audio only.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5sd0hDyXcs>

2.



Babajanyan

The little known and largely forgotten Mascagni verismo opera, "Iris," is a tragedy set in Japan several years before Puccini's "Madame Butterfly" was written. And the tragedy of it is so potent, so grim, so heartbreaking that it perhaps explains why the opera is not often performed. The ending is so shattering that SOL will forego summarizing it, leaving it to those who wish to brave the opera summary linked below. I mean, gasp. Still, this is an excellent opera, well worth reviving (the "sun chorus" alone is fabulous.) Here is the little heart-rending aria, "Io pingo," in which Iris, an innocent raised and cared for by a blind man, laments the terrible changes in her life. The soprano is one Karine Babajanyan.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0ym6IQISsA&t=9s>

Translation:

*Io pingo... pingo,
Ma il mio pennello invano stendo,
Intingo!
Va la mia mano invano!
Invano, invano va la mia mano!
Io penso a un fiore,
E n'esce invece un'angue tutto terrore,
Tutto un rosso di sangue!
Se voglio un cielo,
Azzuro in mio pensiero,
È un fosco velo,
Un velo tinto in nero!
La fantasia con sè m'involta
E porta di casa mia a la picciola porta;
Là la pupilla d'un cieco
Finalmente ha una scintilla,
Una favilla d'una luce rovente
Che fulge e brilla,
Ma il lucer d'una lacrima*

Che lentamente stilla!
(Accasciata, nasconde il viso tra le mani.)
In paradiso (han detto) non si piange!
Ed io di lacrime... ho i miei occhi pieni!
(Una cortina si solleva lentamente e Kyoto introduce Osaka.
I due uomini si soffermano sul limitare della porta
e guardanola la fanciulla seduta davanti al tavolino dei colori.)

ENGLISH:

I paint, I paint
But I spread my brush in vain,
I dip!
My hand goes in vain!
In vain, in vain does my hand go!
I think of a flower,
And instead a blood of terror comes out,
All red with blood!
If I want a sky,
Blue in my thoughts,
It's a dark veil,
A veil dyed black!
Fantasy takes me away with it
And take the little door from my house;
There the pupil of a blind man
He finally has a spark,
A spark of scorching light
That shines and shines,
But the light of a tear
Which slowly drips!
(Slumped, she hides her face in her hands.)
In heaven (they said) there is no crying!
And I'm full of tears... my eyes are full!
(A curtain slowly lifts and Kyoto ushers in Osaka.
The two men pause at the edge of the door
and look at the girl sitting in front of the color table.)

About the opera:

<https://www.classicalexplorer.com/mascagnis-iris-a-verismo-gem/>?

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iris_\(opera\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iris_(opera))

SOL EXTRA!

What the hell, you are wondering, as you scratch your hairy guts, is verismo opera? Just this (from Wikipedia):

In opera, verismo (Italian for 'realism'), from vero, meaning 'true', was a post-Romantic operatic tradition associated with Italian composers such as Pietro Mascagni, Ruggero Leoncavallo, Umberto

Giordano, Francesco Cilea and Giacomo Puccini. Verismo as an operatic genre had its origins in an Italian literary movement of the same name. This was in turn related to the international literary movement of naturalism as practised by Émile Zola and others. Like naturalism, the verismo literary movement sought to portray the world with greater realism. In so doing, Italian verismo authors such as Giovanni Verga wrote about subject matter, such as the lives of the poor, that had not generally been seen as a fit subject for literature. Got it?

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verismo?>

3.

Warning: simplistic statements ahead! Verismo opera tends toward heavy, over-the-top emoting, in the interests of expressing "real world" tragedy---sometimes to the "neglect" of melodiousness. Think: opposite of bel canto. Puccini, however, was almost never guilty of this neglect---quite the opposite. He seemed to understand that the two qualities are not mutually exclusive, or perhaps an inspired gift for writing melody was just organic to his musical character. (Interesting that he once, and only once, deliberately turned away from this gift, in the interests of modernity, in his opera, "La Fanciulla del West.") Here is Asmik Gregorian, who just debuted as "Madame Butterfly" at the Met, with the principal aria from that opera, "Un bel di vedremo." Elegant, with subtly couched power. Contrast this with "Io pingo" from "Iris" (post # 2), and you will see what I mean about emoting vs. melodious emoting.

In concert:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFQ5rOOyBmo>

On stage in 2020:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rz6drknMDgo>

Setting: Butterfly's house

Synopsis: Three years have passed since Butterfly's American husband left her. Her servant Suzuki, tries to convince her that he isn't coming back, but Butterfly is convinced that he will. She sings of the day that he will return. She dreams of him sailing into the harbor and climbing up the hill to meet her.

Translation:

<https://www.aria-database.com/search.php?individualAria=38>

REVIEW of Gregorian's Met Debut:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/28/arts/music/asmik-grigorian-madama-butterfly-review.html?>

4.

More verismo punishment for you, you naughty SOL non-listeners! The opera, "Il Pagliacci," is a kind of operatic caricature, or has become such, sad to say. The image of the weeping clown is forever cited, satirized in "popular culture." This is the ironic distinction accorded the greatest works of art, of course, that they invite the most parody. The ultimate backhanded compliment, I suppose. The opera is a verismo (realism) potboiler, a succinct, colorful tale of jealousy and murder and self-destruction, with gripping, inspired music by Ruggiero Leoncavallo---the best he ever wrote. The aria, "Vesti la Giubba," transcends pop culture mockery to remain always profound and moving, one of the great, crushing moments in all opera. Here is the superb tenor, Giuseppe di Stefano, when he was at his best, and voice not ruined by cigarettes, booze, dalliance with the "opposite camp." In this scene, Canio, an entertainer

with a traveling troupe, has discovered that his wife and co-star, Netta, is having an affair---yet he must go on stage with her, as a clown. "Put on the costume," he sings. With English subtitles.

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

Synopsis:

Canio chases Silvio, but does not catch him and does not see his face. He demands that Nedda tell him the name of her lover, but she refuses. He threatens her with a knife, but Beppe disarms him. Beppe insists that they prepare for the performance. Tonio tells Canio that her lover will give himself away at the play. A heartbroken Canio is left alone to put on his costume and prepare to laugh ("Vesti la giubba" – "Put on the costume").

ANNNND. . .the inevitable "Seinfeld" clip. Take it away, Crazy Joe. . .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtrwWraQDn8>

5.



Verismo composer Francisco Cilea wrote only five operas, but has a high batting average, as two remain in standard repertory today: "L'Arlésienne," and "Adriana Lecouvreur." His most famous aria is certainly the so-called "Lamento di Federico" from "L'Arlesienne" ("The Girl from Arles.") It has long been a tenor showcase standard, memorably assayed by the likes of, oh, Mario Lanza and Mario del Monaco. This is "E' la solita storia," or "It's the usual story." Sung here by yes, both Marios! ¿Quién es más macho? Setting: on the banks of Vacares pond in the region of Camargue, the end of May, late 1800's, Italy.

Synopsis: Federico has run away from home after finding out that his beloved girl from Arles has betrayed him with the stable boy. He is found by Baldassarre and L'Innocente, but the former leaves to tend the flocks and the latter falls asleep. As L'Innocente falls asleep, he mentions a line from a story told earlier about a goat. This comment sets off Federico and he despairs over his lost goat, I mean love.

Lanza, live at the Royal Albert Hall, 1958:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJ1alqEoPFU>

Del Monaco:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JWfLxEmf1U>

About the opera:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27arlesiana>

6.



Okay, kids, seeing as you are bored by SOL's verismo selections, cough cough, we generously revert to the usual grab-bag routine. . . in this case, ditching any faint traces of overt, uncouth emoting for the purest, most couth melodiousness from the 17th century composer, Claudio Monteverdi---the pre-eminent pioneer of operatic form. This is the duet for soprano and counter-tenor, "Pur ti Miro," from Monteverdi's final opera, "L'incoronazione di Poppea" (The Coronation of Poppea), which, yes, is still widely performed today. Beauty is beauty, after all.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ajllwv0ljX8>

Translation:

<https://www.opera-arias.com/monteverdi/l%27incoronazione-di-poppea/pur-ti-miro/>?

Annnnd. . . how it can look in a ridiculous, sexed-up, trashy staging, with a woman instead of counter-tenor:

(Sonya Yoncheva, Poppea, Kate Lindsey, Nerone).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quhXDVX6jjA>

Or, if you'd prefer a tenor and soprano, this is pretty hard to beat (also makes more sense, to this ear):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wdGlwo_7Mk

7.

Here is an engaging item making its SOL debut (quite a distinction, of course, urp.) This is the lilting, plaintive, bittersweet aria, "Il est doux," from "Herodiade," by Jules Massenet, sung here by the redoubtable Renee Fleming. Based on the novella *Hérodias* (1877) by Gustave Flaubert, the opera was first performed at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels in 1881, for those keeping score at home. Yes, this is another telling of the strange interplay among that fun-loving trio, Salome, John the Baptist, and Herod---decidedly tamer than the Freud-anticipating 1905 Richard Strauss version to follow! With English subtitles.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_R5VMImRNk

Setting: courtyard of Herodiade's palace, Jerusalem during the reign of King Herod Antipas (30 AD)

Synopsis: Salome is looking for her mother. She was abandoned at birth and does not know that she is actually the daughter of the King's wife, Herodiade. She tells Phanuel of her determination to find her mother and then continues, telling him that the only one who understands her is the prophet Jean (John the Baptist).

8.



Pre-blonde Fleming

You thought we would follow that Salome with the other, distinctly crazed telling of the tale by Strauss, didn't you? Better luck next time! Reaching down down down in the SOL grab-bag, why, Renee Fleming popped up up up again---this time with a Puccini aria that, in terms of persuasive, moving melodic line, really puts the previous Massenet aria to shame. Yes, I realize that is a silly thing to say, as everything is a matter of taste, and has its own merit. . .yet when I hear Puccini compared with so many other wonderful composers, notably his verismo compatriots, this is just so often the case. It is nothing less than striking how Puccini's gift of poignancy in crafting a "tune" just towers above so much other (splendid) music. This is "In Quelle Trine Morbide" ("In those soft laces") from "Manon Lescaut." (By the way, I highly recommend the silent epic, "When a Man Loves," based on "Manon," starring John Barrymore and his future wife, Dolores Costello.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1CtG2b6JhU>

Setting: Geront's house, Paris, France, 18th century

Synopsis: Remembering poor student Des Grieux's ardent and sincere love, Manon is not sure she made the right decision to sell out to "sugar daddy" (apologies, Kate) Geronte, with all his wealth and comfort. Even with the luxury she has, there is something that chills her soul.

Translation:

*È ver! L'ho abbandonato
senza un saluto, un bacio!
Si guarda intorno e si ferma cogli occhi all'alcova.
In quelle trine morbide ...
nell'alcova dorata v'è un silenzio
gelido, mortal, v'è un silenzio,
un freddo che m'agghiaccia!
Ed io che m'ero avvezza
a una carezza
voluttuosa
di labbra ardenti e d'infuocate braccia
or ho tutt'altra cosa!*

*pensierosa
O mia dimora umile,
tu mi ritorni innanzi
gaia, isolata, bianca
come un sogno gentile
di pace e d'amor!*

ENGLISH:

*It's true! I abandoned him
without a greeting, a kiss!
He looks around and stops his eyes on the alcove.
In those soft laces...
in the golden alcove there is silence
cold, mortal, there is a silence,
a cold that freezes me!
And I was used to it
to a caress
voluptuous
of burning lips and fiery arms
now I have something completely different!
thoughtful
O my humble abode,
you come back before me
gay, isolated, white
like a gentle dream
of peace and love!*

9.

Tricked you. Now you get the *other* Salome opera, the naughty one with the score supercharged with delirium, lust, perversion, madness---you know, like American culture. This is, of course, the runaway brilliant rendering by Richard Strauss, based on the 1891 play by Oscar Wilde (which explains much.) It was variously banned, censored, booed in its first performances early in the 20th century, though today is recognized not only for sheer genius writing, but, shall we say, its psychological complexities. Here is the final scene, from a German production with English subtitles, in three parts. The principals are Leonie Rysanek, Cheryl Studer, Horst Hiestermann.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI02Rj5xhFM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Op1VoQXXARs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJiFHv70WPo>

ANNND. . .a 1923 silent version of the "Dance of the Seven Veils" with Alla Nazimova (who also produced.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvshzV591Gg>

FINAL BOW:

SOL returns to wondrous Magda Olivero (see post # 1) in a supple, artful, heartfelt rendering of the aria, "Poveri Fiori," from the other Cilea verismo opera still in repertory, "Adriana Lecouvreur." This is a live performance from 1959. I would say "rare," but any recording of Olivero is rare. Nice diminuendo, by the way (said the archbishop to the actress.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reOP2Tx8yPk>

Setting: a room in Adriana's house, Paris, 1730.

Synopsis: On her birthday, the actress, Adriana Lecouvreur, is sent a package which she believes is from her estranged love, Maurizio. Depressed and suicidal because of Maurizio's betrayal of their love, her mood is made worse when she opens the package and finds that it contains the decrepit remains of the violets that she gave Maurizio some time ago as a sign of their love. She sings to them of her sorrow. Little does she know, however, that the package is from Maurizio's other paramour, the Princesse de Bouillon, who has soaked the flowers in poison! And you wonder why they call it "opera". . .

SOL EXTRA!

There are at least three operas based on the wildly popular 1731 novel, "Manon Lescaut," by Antoine François Prévost: one by Puccini, one by Massenet, and one by Auber---and there is a great movie version of the story from 1927 with John Barrymore and Dolores Costello. It's an epic, folks, and here it is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57ywjwWAYY>





MAY 4 & 5 | THURS & FRI
MSM UNDERGRADUATE OPERA THEATRE

**L'incoronazione
di Poppea**

MUSIC BY CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI
LIBRETTO BY GIOVANNI FRANCESCO BUSENELLO

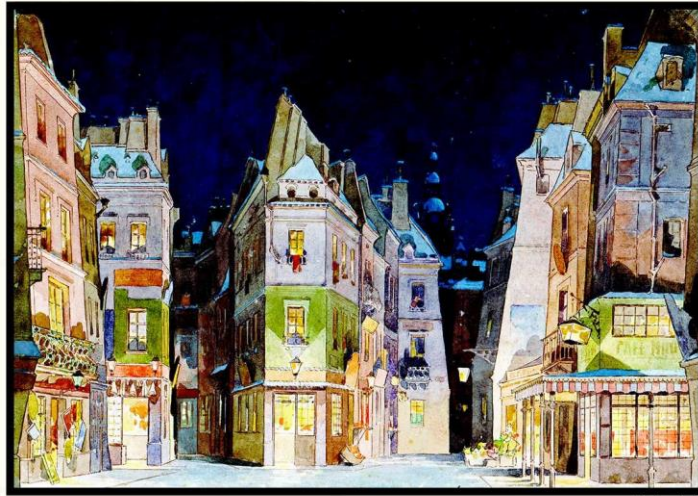
Jackson McKinnon, Conductor
Chloe Treat, Director

7:30 PM The Riverside Theatre
Free, Tickets Required

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PUCCINI

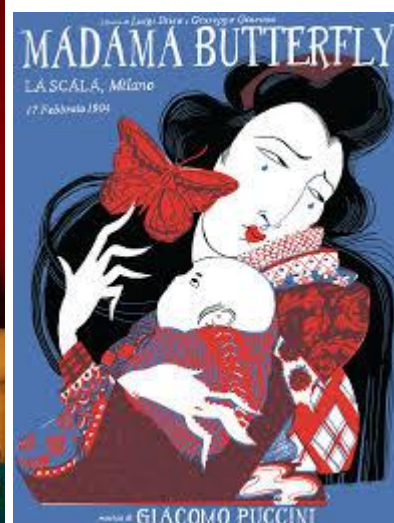


Hohnstein

La Bohème

Act II - At the Latin Quarter

Set design - La Scala - Milan - Italy - 1896





J. Fenneker
23



Bohème

HAUPTDARSTELLERIN:

MARIA JACOBINI

REGIE: GENNARO RIGELLI

MARMORHAUS

KURFÜRSTENDAMM 236

DIR. SIEGBERT GOLDSCHMIDT

