

Saturdee Opry Links Under-Appreciated Edition/ Rip Rense 10/27/24

Saturdee Opry Links Overture

Bellini: "Norma"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=us-wkGxPoZw>



Annick Massis



Julie Fuchs



Robert Merrill



Giorgio Tozzi



Samuel Ramey



Franco Corelli

1.

Saturdee Opry Links begins with a less popular aria that deserves more acclaim: "Meco all'altar di Venere," from Bellini's "Norma." Why does it merit more popularity? It's dramatic, compelling, ultimately anthemic, and expresses what it means, especially when intoned by Franco Corelli. Have you ever felt like you had so much bottled up inside, pent-up, with no way to express it? One of the functions of opera is to give voice to such suppressed emotion, and that is what Bellini pulled off here. Just pretend Corelli is singing about the current state of election affairs in the USA. Or, as Bullwinkle used to say to Rocky, "Just listen!"

Synopsis:

For those who like to know what sort of plot vagaries are at issue. . .

Act One: Pollione and Flavio enter. Although Norma has secretly broken her vows in order to love him and has borne him two children, Pollione tells Flavio that he no longer loves Norma, having fallen in love with the priestess Adalgisa. But he expresses some remorse, describing his dream in which Adalgisa was beside him at the altar of Venus and a huge storm arose: (Pollione, aria: "Meco all'altar di Venere" / "With me at the altar in Rome was Adalgisa dressed in white, veiled all in white.") The storm presaged disaster for both Norma and himself: "Thus does Norma punish her faithless lover," he declares.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU47DQa_iHQ

Translation:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meco_all%27altar_di_Venere

2.

There really are countless splendid moments in opera, and only crazed devotees can cite and discuss them. So it's your lucky day---no crazed devotee is SOL. Rather, our appreciation is that of an average ear struck simply by beauty and expression. You know, probably like you. Here is another neglected aria, another of abundant splendid moments that are apt to go in one ear and out the other, unjustly taken for granted in the overall context of a full opera performance. This is a prayer---another apt utterance for this terrible time in the country and world---from Verdi's successful early work, "Attila." Soprano Annick Massis exquisitely sings "Liberamente or piangi," or "Freely, now cry. . ." from act one. (Also known as "Oh! nel fuggente nuvolo," if you're keeping score at home.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZKMqLtCD8w&t=5s>

About the opera:

Attila is an opera in a prologue and three acts by Giuseppe Verdi to an Italian libretto by Temistocle Solera, based on the 1809 play Attila, König der Hunnen (Attila, King of the Huns) by Zacharias Werner. The opera received its first performance at La Fenice in Venice on 17 March 1846.

Synopsis:

Odabella laments her late father and (believing him to be dead) also her lover Foresto (Oh! Nel fuggente nuvolo / "O father, is your image not imprinted on the fleeting clouds?...").

Translation:

ODABELLA

Liberamente or piangi...

Sfrenati, o cor.

La queta ora, in che posa

Han pur le tigri, io sola

Scorro di loco in loco.

Eppur sempre quest'ora

Attendo e invoco.

Oh! nel fuggente nuvolo

Non sei tu, padre, impresso?...

Cielo!.., ha mutato immagine!...

Il mio Foresto è desso.

Sospendi, o rivo, il murmure,

Aura, non più fremir...

Ch'io degli amati spiriti

Possa la voce udir.

ENGLISH:

DABELLA

Freely now cry...

Unbridled, oh heart.

The quiet time, in what pose

Even the tigers have them, I alone

I scroll from site to site.

Yet always this hour

I wait and invoke.

Oh! in the fleeting cloud

Are you not impressed, father?...

Heavens!.., he has changed his image!...

This is my Foresto.

Suspend, oh stream, the murmuring,

Aura, tremble no more...

That I of the beloved spirits

May the voice hear.

3.



Rossini's two-act epic, "Semiramide," is generally thought to be the last opera in baroque tradition--- meaning certain structure and custom, but not literal style. This was 1823, and Rossini's operas were very grand, on the cusp of romanticism (never mind Beethoven telling Verdi to his face that Italians should stick to comedy!), far from Vivaldi, Gluck, et. al. Here is a marvelous, less-known baritone aria (I think you do hear touches of baroque ornamentation) that goes a long way toward defining the long, sustained line of melodic beauty taking root in opera at the time. Whuzzitabout? Oh, well. . .the gist: Semiramide (Semiramis) has been Queen of Assyria for fifteen years, since the death of King Nino, her husband, and the mysterious disappearance of their young son Ninia, heir to the throne, both of whom were victims of a conspiracy. Semiramide now finds herself called upon to nominate her successor. Do you suspect a fateful twist ahead? Here is the great Samuel Ramey with a boffo performance of "Deh! Ti ferma!" ("Wow! It stops you. . .") Listen to all the preceding histrionics, or start with the aria at 8:15.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3tgPzpPP30>

Synopsis:

Semiramide confronts Arsace, who finally hands her the scroll which has revealed all. Horrified, she then understands Arsace's real identity---her long lost son---and becomes remorseful, offering herself to his revengeful blows. He swears filial loyalty, expressing the wish to spare his mother. Together, they each accept the reality, but Arsace declares that he must go to his father's tomb and take whatever action is necessary against his rival for power, Assur. Knowing what is in store, Semiramide urges him to "return to me victorious". Defiantly, Assur enters and proclaims that this will be Arsace's last day on earth. Learning from his men that the people have turned against him, he still vows to kill Arsace. He moves towards the tomb only to find some unknown force, some apparition holding him back---Arsace's father's ghost (Chorus, scena and aria: "Deh ti ferma ... Que' numi furenti. . ." Those wrathful gods, those quivering shades"). His men urge him on, but still the apparition remains in his mind. His men are puzzled, until he seems to recover and then, with his men beside him, vows to fight on.

Translation:

<https://www.opera-arias.com/rossini/semiramide/deh-ti-ferma-ti-placa/>

4.



Stallone

"Stiffelio" was, of course, the Italian name of Sylvester Stallone's early soft porn flick, known as "The Italian Stallion" in English. (Okay, okay, it wasn't---but Stallone did a make soft-core porno with the latter title.) "Stiffelio" was, of course an 1850 Verdi opera that, like Halevy's "Le Juive" several years before, dealt with the somewhat taboo subject of religion. The story: a charismatic pastor returns from a mission to find that his pious wife has been cheating on him---uh-oh---with a man who eventually winds up dead. This Perry Mason plot sent the censors through the roof. But you need not worry about that---here is an under-appreciated aria from the opera, a moving baritone affair called "Lina, pensai che un angelo" ("Lina, I thought you were an angel. . .") Sung here with extraordinary artistry and realism by Vladimir Chernov. (Start at 3:10.)

https://youtu.be/1guS-O4V_e0?si=PMML7av0jTQbATo

Synopsis:

Alone, Stankar reads a letter he has intercepted, in which Raffaele tells Lina that he is fleeing the area and asks her to follow him. He is in despair over his daughter's behavior ("Lina pensai che un angelo in te mi desse il cielo" – "Lina, I thought that in you heaven gave me an angel"). For a moment, he resolves to kill himself and begins to write a letter to Stiffelio.

Translation:

Ei fugge! . . . e con tal foglio

Lina a seguirlo tenta! . . .

Infame! . . . egli s'invola a mia vendetta! . . .

O spada dell'onor che per tant'anni

Cingevi il fianco del guerriero antico

E nei cimenti a lui mietevi gloria,

Vanne lungi da me . . . più non ti merto . . .

Disonorato io son! . . . disonorato!

E ch'è la vita mai senza l'onore?

È un'onta . . . ebbene, sì tolga . . .

Sì, sì un istante, e tutto sia finito!

Ma lasciar tutto! . . . Stiffelio . . . la mia figlia! . . .

La mia colpevol figlia! . . . che! . . . una lagrima! . . .

Lagrima il ciglio d'un soldato! . . . Oh quanto

Sei tu grande, o dolor! . . . Mi strappi il pianto.

Lina, pensai che un angelo

*In te mi desse il cielo,
Raggio d'amor purissimo
Degli anni miei sul gelo . . .
Stolto! . . . sognai! . . . Sparita è
La gioia di mia vita;
Un'innocente lagrima
Spirando non vedrò
Solo seguace al feretro
Il disonore avrò.*

ENGLISH:

*He runs away! . . . and with this sheet
Lina tries to follow him! . . .
Infamous! . . . he flies for my revenge! . . .
O sword of honor that for so many years
You hugged the side of the ancient warrior
And in trials reap glory from him,
Get away from me. . . I don't deserve you anymore. . .
Disgraced I am! . . . dishonored!
And what is life without honor?
It's a disgrace. . . well, yes, remove it. . .
Yes, yes one moment, and it will all be over!
But leave everything! . . . Stiffelio. . . my daughter! . . .
My guilty daughter! . . . That! . . . a tear! . . .
The eye of a soldier sheds tears! . . . Oh how much
You are great, oh pain! . . . You make me cry.
Lina, I thought she was an angel
In you the sky would give me,
Ray of pure love
Of my years on the frost. . .
Fool! . . . I dreamed! . . . Gone it is
The joy of my life;
An innocent tear
When I expire I will not see
Only follower at the coffin
I will have dishonor.*

5.

So we all know all the great arias of Puccini, right? Maybe, maybe not. . . Yes, there actually are less favored Puccini tunes, not in the "top ten" found mostly in "Boheme," "Butterfly," "Tosca," "Turandot." Some might quibble over this particular choice, as it involves a baritone, tenor, and chorus, but it certainly qualifies as a less appreciated Puccini moment. Not surprising, then, that it is from "La Fanciulla del West," or "Girl of the Golden West," the cowboy opera (really) in which Puccini composed against type, in a (successful) quest for modernism. Yet the master's innate affinity for poignancy and beauty

shines through here, in the passage, "Che faranno i vecchi miei" ("What are my old folks doing?") an utterance of longing for home. The theme of this song is woven into the opera, especially in Act II, and is used in intimate moments between the lovers. The bass is Giorgio Tozzi.

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

Translate:

JAKE WALLACE

(di fuori cantando)

"Che faranno i vecchi miei

là lontano,

là lontano,

che faran laggiù?

Tristi e soli i vecchi miei

piangeranno,

penseranno

ch'io non torni più!"

NICK

(facendosi sulla porta)

Ragazzi, vi annunzio Jake Wallace

il menestrello del campo!

(Ma già la canzone nostalgica ha preso tutte quelle anime avide e

rudi: le teste si sollevano, gli orecchi sono tesi: il giuoco langue. Quelli

del piano superiore si affacciano ad osservare: nel silenzio, il tintinnio

dei gettoni adagio adagio si spegne. Jake Wallace, il cantastorie, appare

sulla porta cantando e accompagnandosi sul banjo).

JAKE WALLACE

(entrando)

"La mia mamma...

(Si fermà stupito del silenzio che l'accoglie. Tutti i minatori, col

viso proteso verso di lui, gli fanno cenno con le mani di continuare),

JAKE

(continuando)

... che farà

s' io non torno,

s' io non torno?

Quanto piangerà !"

ALCUNI MINATORI

(dal tavolo del giuoco)

Al telaio tesserà

lino e duolo

pel lenzuolo

che la coprirà ..."

ALCUNI MINATORI

(dal ballatoio della sala superiore)

E il mio cane dopo tanto...

JAKE WALLACE

Il mio cane...

ALTRI MINATORI

(di sopra)

il mio cane

mi ravviserà ?..."

ENGLISH:

JAKE WALLACE

(outside singing)

"What will my old men do

far away,

far away,

what will they do down there?

My old folks are sad and lonely

they will cry,

they will think

I'll never come back again!"

NICK

(coming to the door)

Guys, I bring you Jake Wallace

the camp minstrel!

*(But already the nostalgic song has taken all those greedy souls and
rude: heads are raised, ears are tense: the game languishes. Those
from the upper floor they look out to observe: in the silence, the tinkling
of the tokens slowly goes out. Jake Wallace, the storyteller, appears
at the door singing and accompanying himself on the banjo).*

JAKE WALLACE

(entering)

"My mom...

*(He stops, amazed at the silence that greets him. All the miners, col
face stretched out towards him, they signal him with their seas to continue),*

JAKE

(continuing)

... what will he do

if I don't come back,

what if I don't come back?

How much he will cry!"

SOME MINERS

(from the game table)

At the loom he will weave

linen and duolo

for the sheet

that will cover it..."

SOME MINERS

(from the balcony of the upper room)

And my dog after a long time...

JAKE WALLACE

My dog...

OTHER MINERS

(above)

my dog

will he recognize me?..."

6.



Less shiny gems, but gems nonetheless? Neglected, or deservedly overlooked, taken for granted? You be the judge. Today's SOL continues with what are nothing if not second-tier arias and passages from great composers---this time, again, with Puccini. Right, hard to imagine anything of Puccini's has not gotten its due, but this is not the case. As we know, Puccini wrote a bonafide masterwork late in his career, the operatic triptych, "Il Trittico," consisting of three short operas: the noir tragedy, "Il Tabarro," the devastating "Suor Angelica," and the romp, "Gianni Schicchi." Yet did you know that the composer yanked an aria from "Tabarro" and replaced it with something less conventionally melodic, more fraught with verismo outburst? Well, now you know. Yes, "Scorri, fiume eterno" ("Flow, river eternal!"), an expression of anguish, was replaced by "Nulla! Silenzio!" Here is a recording of the original aria, sung with panache by Met star Robert Merrill. Amazing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ctuX4QWAtE>

Synopsis:

The cuckolded boatman, Michele, compares his grief at his wife's infidelity and the loss of their child to the never-ending Seine river, hoping that its waters will either wash away his sorrow or drown him.

Much as France will feel if Trump is elected.

Translation:

Scorri, fiume eterno! Scorri!

Come il tuo mistero è fondo!

Ah! l'ansia che mi strugge non ha fine!

Passa, fiume eterno; passa!

E me pure travolgi!

Quante son le rovine

che calmò la tua onda?

*Tu della miseria
hai segnata la fine!...
E sempre calmo passi, e non ti ferma
dolore nè paura nè tormento
nè volgere di anni!
Continui la tua corsa,
continui il tuo lamento!...
Sono i lamenti, forse, dei tuoi morti?
Di migliaia di morti che portasti
l'un dopo l'altro verso il gran destino
sulle tue braccia lugubri ma forti?
Sono i dolori che tu soffocasti
chiudendo l'urlo estremo in un gorgoglio?
Acqua misteriosa e cupa,
passa sul mio triste cuore!
Lava via la pena e il mio dolore,
fa pur tua la mia sorte!...
E se non puoi la pace,
allor dammi la morte!*

ENGLISH:

*Flow, eternal river! Scroll!
How deep is your mystery!
Ah! the anxiety that torments me has no end!
Pass, eternal river; pass!
And you overwhelm me too!
How many ruins there are
that calmed your wave?
You of misery
you have marked the end!...
And always calmly you pass, and he doesn't stop you
pain nor fear nor torment
nor the space of years!
Continue your run,
continue your lament!...
Are they the laments, perhaps, of your dead?
Of thousands of deaths you brought
one after the other towards the great destiny
on your mournful but strong arms?
They are the pains that you suffocated
closing the extreme scream in a gurgle?
Mysterious and dark water,
passes over my sad heart!
Wash away the pain and my pain,
make my fate yours!...*

And if you can't find peace,
then give me death!

ANNNNNND. . .here is the replacement aria, "Nulla Silenzio!" Did Puccini make the right choice?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-0iG8TVXGI>

Translation:

<https://englishoperatranslations.com/opera-translations/il-tabarro-the-cloak/>

7.



When is Wagner not Wagner? When a tale of the Rhine and Rhine maidens and spirits and gods is written by Alfredo Catalani, that's when. Now, this passage from Catalani's "Loreley," is not nearly as dark or dramatic or thrilling as Wagner, but it has lyric beauty and, yes, melodic and harmonic implications, or imitations, of Wagner. Is it unduly neglected? Welllll. . .it is a compelling opera, and could merit a revival today. Here, from a rare La Scala recording in 1968, is soprano Elena Souliotis with the stormy "Ove son... Donde vengo. . ."

Synopsis:

Walter is betrothed to Anna of Rehberg, niece of the Margrave of Biberich. One May evening while wandering on the banks of the Rhine, Walter encounters the beautiful orphan Loreley and seduces her. He summons his friend Hermann and tells him that he is torn between "lawful and unlawful love". Although Hermann is himself in love with Anna, he counsels Walter to be true to his fiancée. When Walter next encounters Loreley, he tells her that although he loves her, he will marry Anna. He leaves Loreley who has fallen to the ground in a faint. Herman, lamenting that he has yielded his beloved Anna to such a man, appeals to the God of the Rhine and dedicates himself to avenging the wrong done to Anna. The Nymphs of the Rhine and the Spirits of the Air appear and sing in praise of the River God and the God Thor, the lord of the tempest. Loreley comes to them, bemoaning her lost honour and asking how she can avenge her wrongs. Uh-oh. . .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vikcbiAu4JY>

Translation:

(quando tutto è silenzio, scende affannosamente da una rupe dal fondo e si reca sul davanti della scena: ha il volto pallido, le sembianze scomposte, l'occhio vitreo e irrigidito)

Ove son?... donde vengo?...

e dove vado?...

e che m'importa?...

*Sono un fantasma di fanciulla morta,
che nel mistero della selva oscura
vagola senza meta alla ventura!...
Impreca all'uom che amasti, ei mi diceva,
impreca al vil, ingrato!
Nel mio manier un rito si prepara...
«Un'altra io traggo all'ara!»*

LORELEY

*Ma... forse è un orrido
sogno che mi sconvolge e mente e cor...
Forse io m'immagino
d'esser tradita ed egli m'ama ancor!
Oh! se, svegliandomi,
riveder lo potessi a me d'acanto,
oh! se un suo bacio
scender sentissi ad asciugarmi il pianto!...
Ecco! ei mi chiama... ei m'ama!
(poi tornando ad un tratto al sentimento del vero)
Che dissi?... Ah! no! follia!
Son queste larve d'egra fantasia...
Realtà l'angoscia che mi strazia il core...
chi mi compensa del rapito onore?*

ENGLISH:

*(when all is silent, he frantically comes down from one
cliff from the bottom and goes to the front of the scene: he has the
pale face, disheveled features, glassy eyes
and stiffened)
Where am I?... where do I come from?...
and where am I going?...
and what do I care?...
I am a ghost of a dead girl,
than in the mystery of the dark forest
wanders aimlessly on adventure!...
Curse the man you loved, he told me,
curse the vile, ungrateful man!
In my manner a ritual is being prepared...
«I'll draw another one!»*

LORELEY

*But... maybe it's a ravine
dream that shocks me and lies and runs...
Maybe I'm imagining it
of being betrayed and he still loves me!
Oh! if, when I wake up,*

*I could see him again next to me,
Oh! if a kiss from him
come down to dry my tears!...
Here you are! he calls me... he loves me!
What did I say?... Ah! No! folly!
These are larvae of evil fantasy...
Reality is the anguish that tears my heart apart...
Who compensates me for the stolen honor?*

8.



Caruso as Dick Johnson

"Or son sei mesi" from "La Fanciulla del West" is hardly a conventional Puccini tenor aria. Is it under-appreciated? Sure, but that does not put it up there with Puccini's greatest tunes. This is, as opera specialist Neil Kurtzman points out, "Puccini pretending to be Debussy, and it's a great impersonation." Instead of the expected riveting melodies of heart, charm, lament, love, we get impassioned *verismo* weaving in and out of quasi-impressionism. Hardly recognizable as Puccini, but superb, really, in its way. Placido Domingo certainly gets the most out of the proceedings.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8R02q_p9E

Here is Kurtzman summarizing the scene with this aria, and offering various examples of other singers realizing it---plus translation!

<https://medicine-opera.com/2010/09/or-son-sei-mesi/>

9.

Given the popularity of Donizetti's "Daughter of the Regiment," one can't say that this aria is little known, but it probably is under-appreciated---tending to get sort of lost in the plethora of great stuff that Donizetti somehow managed to churn out in his syphilis-shortened life. It has a curvaceous aspect and a haunting quality that anticipate many an aria to come---from Verdi in particular, seems to me. This is "Par le rang et par l'opulence," or "By rank and opulence." With Julie Fuchs.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZE_7ORPJ5U

Synopsis:

Marie has been living against her will, far from her beloved soldiers' regiment, in the Marquise's castle for several months. In a conversation with Sulpice, the Marquise describes how she has sought to modify Marie's military manners and make her a lady of fashion, suitable to be married to her nephew, the Duke of Crakenthorp. Urp. Marie has reluctantly agreed. At one point, Sulpice asks Maria to play something ladylike on piano, but promptly lapses into martial music, and sings the old regimental song. The Marquise, disgusted, sits down at the piano and attempts to work through a different piece with Marie, who becomes more and more distracted. Finally Marie is left alone, forlorn and hopeless of escaping her fate. (aria: *Par le rang et par l'opulence* / "They have tried in vain to dazzle me").

Translation:

*Par le rang et par l'opulence,
En vain l'on a cru m'éblouir;
Il me faut taire ma souffrance...
Et ne vivre que de souvenir!
Sous les bijoux et la dentelle,
Je cache un chagrin sans espoir.*

Ah!

*A quoi me sert d'être si belle,
Lui seul, il ne doit pas me voir
O vous à qui je fus ravie
Dont j'ai partagé le destin...
Je donnerais toute ma vie
Pour pouvoir vous serrer la main!*

ENGLISH:

*By rank and opulence,
In vain they thought they were dazzling me;
I must silence my suffering...
And live only on memories!
Under the jewels and lace,
I hide a hopeless sorrow.*

Ah!

*What good is it for me to be so beautiful?
He alone must not see me
O you to whom I was delighted
Whose destiny I shared...
I would give my whole life
To be able to shake your hand!*

FINAL BOW:



Freni

To conclude today's under-appreciated aria edition, here is one that might be familiar, but, in SOL's opinion, not familiar enough. Yes, there are, as previously said, so many, many worthwhile arias in the repertory that do not get due acclaim. The dumbing down of classical radio and opera repertory, all in the name of pandering for bucks, has left less room for so many worthwhile operas (including many by forgotten composers that deserve revival.) Perhaps this is one aria that merits a bit "higher standing," especially considering the beguiling melody that frames it. From "L'Amico Fritz" ("My Friend, Fritz"), by Pietro Mascagni, master of verismo, this is "Son Piochi Fiori," or "Just a few flowers," sung here by the great Mirella Freni. What do you think?

Synopsis:

Synopsis : Suzel is preparing to pick cherries as the farmers go out to the fields. Fritz approaches and helps her. They sing of the enchantment of the spring and the flowers. As Suzel gives Fritz flowers as a present, she sings him a song about them.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FPuMVVegsw>

Or, if you prefer, a more ardent reading in a recital by one Sydney Kucine:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cl-8ait4DY>

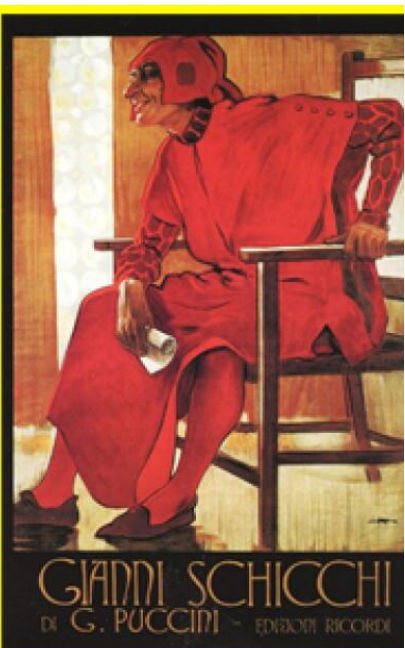
Translation:

https://www.aria-database.com/translations/fritz02_son.txt

About the opera:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27amico_Fritz



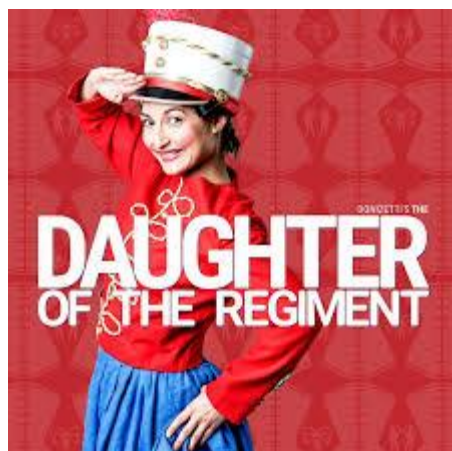




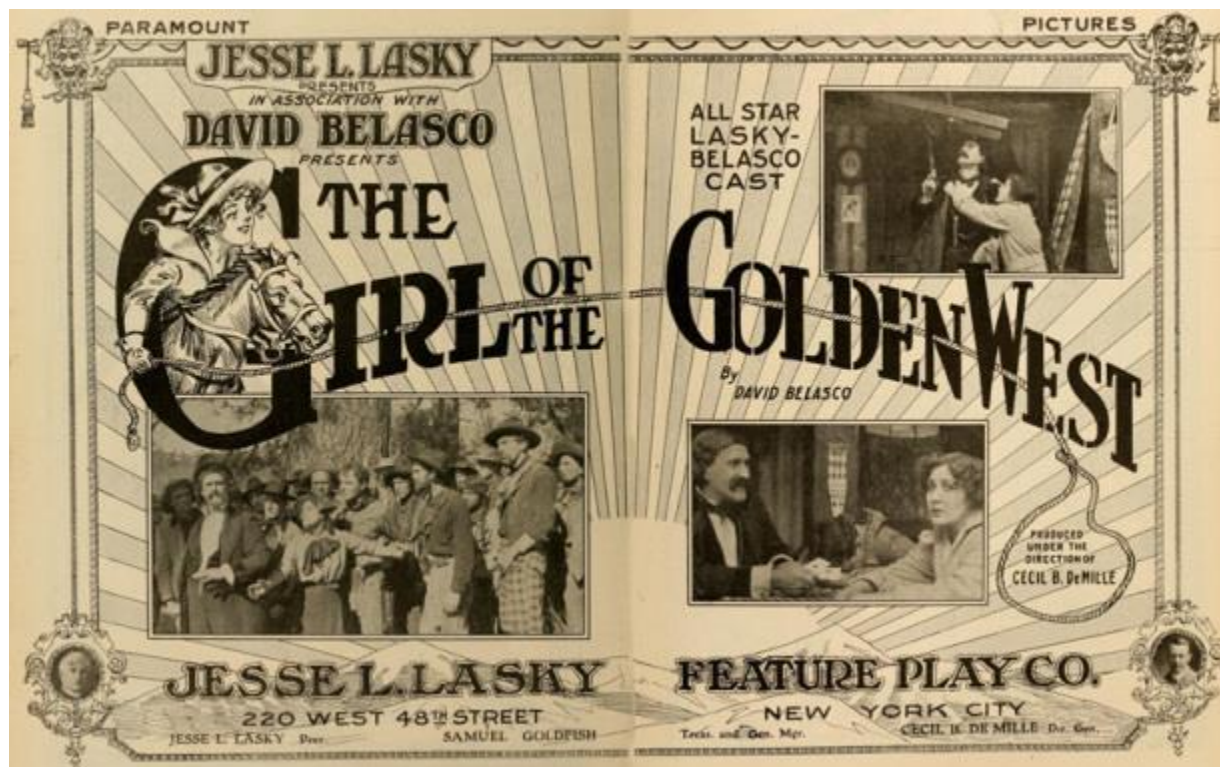
Not a scene from Eastwood's "Hang 'em High." From a Met production of "Fanciulla."







(more)



The play that inspired the opera.