

The History and Geography of Opera



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Of Rochester

The Opera Theater Guild of Rochester

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Opera is Music Drama

- ◆ The plot conveys the story and is a framework for the music. It defines the action and the mood, but the drama is largely carried by the music.
- ◆ There must be dramatic continuity within the music, as well as the plot.
- ◆ The music, more than the text, carries the drama. This is what distinguishes opera from other forms of musical stage, such as Broadway musical or Viennese operetta.

The Journey – The Beginning

- ◆ Mantua, Italy – 1607
 - Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*
- ◆ France – 1674
 - Lully, *Alceste*
- ◆ England – 1738 (Italian Tradition)
 - Handel *Xerxes*
- ◆ Germany – 1762 (Italian Tradition)
 - Gluck *Orfeo ed Euridice*
- ◆ Germany – 1782 (German *Singspiel*)
 - Mozart, *Abduction from the Seraglio*
- ◆ Italy – 1816 (*Opera Buffa*)
 - Rossini, *Barber of Seville*

The Journey – The Golden Age

- ◆ Germany – 1821
 - Weber, *Der Freischütz*
- ◆ Italy – 1853
 - Verdi, *La Traviata*
- ◆ Germany – 1862
 - Wagner, *Die Walküre*
- ◆ France – 1883
 - Delibes, *Lakmé*
- ◆ Russia – 1898
 - Rimsky-Korsakov, *Sadko*

The Journey – 20th Century

- ◆ Italy – 1924
 - Puccini, *Turandot*
- ◆ Russia – 1934
 - Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*
- ◆ England – 1948
 - Benjamin Britten, *Peter Grimes*
- ◆ United States – 1979
 - Steven Sondheim, *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*

Europe - 1600



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Origins of Opera

- ◆ Greek Drama
 - Scholars believed that Greek drama was sung or chanted rather than simply spoken (Girolamo Mei, 1519-1594).
- ◆ 16th Century Italian Madrigals and Oratorios
 - "Through-composed" setting of short poems;
 - ◆ Through-composed: Each line has different setting reflecting rhythm and sense of words;
 - Heroic and sentimental subjects;
 - Madrigal Cycles were produced.
 - Polyphonic
- ◆ *Intermedi (or Intermezzi)*
 - Musical interludes between acts of Renaissance and Baroque plays.

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The Florentine Camerata

- ◆ Musicians, poets, scholars and patrons.
- ◆ Hosted by Giovanni Bardi, Conte di Vernio (1534-1612) in Florence.
- ◆ Sought to revive ancient Greek music and drama.
- ◆ Members included:
 - Jacopo Peri (1561-1633)
 - Giulio Caccini (1551-1618)
 - Ottavio Rinuccini (1562-1621)
 - Vincenzo Galilei (c.1525-1591)
 - Girolamo Mei (via correspondence)

Vincenzo Galilei

- ◆ *Dialogo della musica antica et della moderna* (Dialog Concerning Ancient and Modern Music), 1581.
- ◆ Based on Mei's doctrines. Attempted to revive practices of ancient Greek drama.
- ◆ Attacked Polyphony, dominant practice at the time, and advocated Monody as the only means of expressing poetry in music.
 - Monody: Only single melody line with appropriate pitches and rhythms derived from inflections of text.

The First Operas

1. Jacopo Peri, *Dafne*, 1597 (mostly lost)
Poem by Rinuccini.
2. Peri, *Euridice*, 1600;
3. Giulio Caccini, *Euridice*, 1600;
Both to a poem by Rinuccini.
4. Claudio Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, 1607

Source: *Norton Concise History of Western Music*

Some Vocabulary

- ◆ **Recitative:** Sung passage with the rhythm of speech, rather than song or dance.
- ◆ **Aria:** Sung passage which is lyrical and song-like.
- ◆ **Arioso:** Form intermediate between Aria and Recitative.
- ◆ **Ritornello:** In early opera, melodic orchestral passages between sections of a recitative.

Mantua, 1607

Claudio Monteverdi

Toccatà and Prolog from *L'Orfeo*

Lynn Dawson (s) – 1987

Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque
Soloists, His Majesty's Sagbutts and
Cornetts, John Eliot Gardner, cond.

What's Happening – 1607

- ◆ Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* – 1604
- ◆ Cervantes, *Don Quixote* – 1605
- ◆ Rembrandt born – 1606
- ◆ Founding of Jamestown – 1607
- ◆ Galileo observes Moons of Jupiter – 1610
- ◆ El Greco, Rubens active
- ◆ Bach won't be born until 1685

1607 – L'Orfeo

Claudio Monteverdi, 1567 - 1643

Libretto by Alessandro Striggio after poem
Euridice by Ottavio Rinuccini.

First Performance, 1607, Ducal Palace of
Mantua

Setting of the Greek legend of Orpheus and
Euridice.

Fanfare "Toccata" (Overture); Prolog: *La
Musica*, the Personification of Music, introduces
the drama to the aristocratic audience

Toccata and Prolog from *L'Orfeo*

TOCCATA (conclusion)

PROLOG

Ritornello

LA MUSICA

{Shamelessly flattering aristocratic audience}

From my sacred river I come to you,
illustrious heroes, noble scions of kings,
whose glorious deeds Fame relates,
though falling short of the truth, since the target is too high.

Ritornello

Toccatà and Prolog from *L'Orfeo* (2)

I am Music, who in sweet accents
can calm each troubled heart,
and now with noble anger, now with love,
can kindle the most frigid minds.

Ritornello

[Singing to a golden lyre, I am wont
sometimes to charm mortal ears;
and in this way inspire souls with a longing
for the sonorous harmony of heaven's lyre.]

Toccatà and Prolog from *L'Orfeo* (conclusion)

Ritornello

Hence desire spurs me to tell you of Orpheus,
the immortal glory of Pindus and Helicon,
Orpheus who drew wild beasts to him by his singing,
and who subjugated Hades by his entreaties.

Ritornello

Now while I alternate my songs, now happy, now sad,
let no small bird stir among these trees,
no noisy wave be heard on these riverbanks,
and let each little breeze halt in its course.

Ritornello

France, 1674
Jean-Baptiste Lully
Ritournelle . . . "Il faut passer . . ."
from *Alceste*

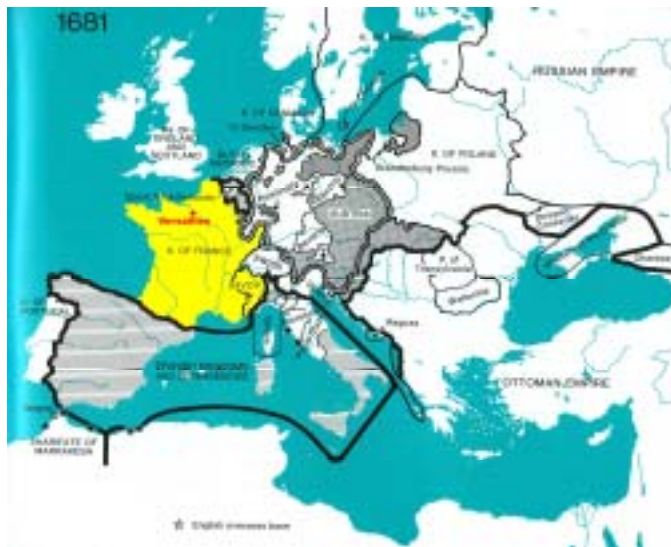
Gregory Reinhart (b) - 1991
La Grande Ecurie et la Chambre du Roy,
Ensemble Vocal Sagittarius, Jean-
Claude Malgloire, cond.

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France, 1674



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What's Happening – 1674

- ◆ Czar Peter the Great born – 1672
- ◆ Vermeer, *The Pearl Necklace* – 1670
- ◆ Cristopher Wren active
- ◆ Antonio Stradivari active
- ◆ Greenwich Observatory founded – 1675
- ◆ Isaac Newton, *Opticks* – 1675
- ◆ La Salle explores Great Lakes – 1678-79
- ◆ Bach won't be born for 11 more years

1674 – *Alceste*, or *The Triumph of Hercules*

Jean-Baptiste Lully, 1632-1687

Libretto by Phillipe Quinault after the play
Alcestis by Euripides.

First Performance, 1674, Paris

Setting of the Greek legend of Alcestis and
Admetis.

Charon, the boatman who conveys the shades
of the dead across the river Styx to Hades,
cheerfully sings about his work

Alceste, "Il faut passer . . ."

RITORNELLO

CHARON, *rowing his boat*
You have to cross sometime soon,
You have to cross in my boat;
People come young or aged,
To please the whims of the Fates.
We welcome here, as equals,
The shepherd and the monarch.
You have to cross sometime soon,
You have to cross in my boat;

RITORNELLO

Alceste, "Il faut passer . . ." - 2

CHARON
You who would like to cross, approach, wandering spirits.
Advance, come closer, woeful shades;
You can pay the price I demand,
Or go back and wander around these somber shores.
THE SHADES
Let me cross, Charon, let me cross.
CHARON
The first thing you must do is to satisfy me;
You have to pay for all my laborious chores.
THE SHADES
Let me cross, Charon, let me cross.
*Charon allows into his boat the shades who have enough money to
pay him.*
CHARON
Pay me, get in, pay me, get in:

England, 1738
George Frideric Handel

**"Fronde tenere e belle ... Ombra mai
fu" ("Largo") from *Xerxes*
(*Italian Tradition*)**

Anita Terzian (ms) – 1989
Polish Radio Chamber Orchestra, Agnes
Duczmal, cond.

What's Happening – 1738

- ◆ Hogarth, Boucher active
- ◆ William Byrd founds Richmond, VA
- ◆ Linnaeus, *Systema naturae* – 1735
- ◆ JS Bach *Mass in B minor* – 1738
- ◆ Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* – 1740
- ◆ Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift, Voltaire active
- ◆ First cuckoo clocks in Black Forest District

1738 – *Xerxes*

George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759

Libretto by Silvio Stampigli set by
Giovanni Bononcini (1694) after *Serse*
by Nicoló Minato, set by Cavalli (1654)

First Performance, 1738, London

Legendary Xerxes seeks love.

Xerxes, pining for love, serenades a plane
tree.

"Fronde tenere e belle ... Ombra mai fu" (Largo) from *Xerxes*

*A summer house on one side, of a garden, in
the middle of which is a plane tree, and
Xerxes under it.*

{Recitative}

May fate, ye tender and ye beauteous leaves,
Of my beloved plane to you prove kind;
May thy dear peace be undisturb'd by storms,
By thunder's rage, or by the light'nings blast;
Nor may'st thou be, by ruffl'ing winds,
profaned.

"Fronde tenere e belle ... Ombra mai
su" (Largo) from *Xerxes* – 2

{Orchestral interlude}

{Aria}

No, never vegetable made
A dearer and a lovelier shade;
And never from the sun's fierce heat,
Was more agreeable retreat.
(*Xerxes stands and admires the tree.*)

{Brief orchestral conclusion}

Germany, 1762
Cristoph Willibald von Gluck

"Che faró senza Euridice?" from
Orfeo ed Euridice
(Italian Tradition)

Derek Lee Ragin (ct) – 1993
The Monteverdi Choir, The English
Baroque Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner,
cond.

What's Happening – 1762

- ◆ Bach dies – 1750
- ◆ Handel dies – 1759
- ◆ Haydn appointed Kapellmeister of Esterházy – 1762
- ◆ Boucher and Tiepolo active
- ◆ James Watt invents condenser – 1764
- ◆ Royal Academy, London founded – 1768
- ◆ Oliver Goldsmith, Laurence Sterne active

1762 – Orfeo ed Euridice

Christoph Willibald von Gluck, 1714-1787

Libretto by Raniero de Calzabigi after the Greek legend.

First Performance, 1762, Vienna

Setting of the Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice

After losing Eurydice (for the second time), Orpheus laments his loss.

"Che faró senza Euridice?" from *Orfeo ed Euridice*

{Orchestral introduction}

ORPHEUS

What can I do without Eurydice?
Where can I go without my beloved?
Eurydice! Eurydice!
Oh God! Answer me!
I am still your faithful lover!

What can I do without Eurydice?
Where can I go without my beloved?
Eurydice! Eurydice!
Ah, I am left without any refuge, any hope,
either on earth or in heaven!

{Orchestral finale}

Germany, 1782 WA Mozart

Osmin's Aria from *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (German *Singspiel*)

Kurt Moll (b) - 1987
Munich Radio Orchestra, Kurt Eichhorn,
cond.

1782 – The Abduction from the Seraglio

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1756-1791

Libretto by Gottlieb Stephanie after *Bellmont and Constanze* by Bretzner and Andre.

First Performance, 1782, Vienna

A young Spanish nobleman rescues his fiancée from the harem of a Turkish Pasha

Osmin, the good pasha's evil overseer, rejoices when he believes that he will have vengeance upon the Spaniards

Osmin's Aria from *Abduction from the Seraglio*

OSMIN:

Oh, how I shall triumph
when they lead you off to execution
and put the rope around your necks!

I shall dance and laugh and jump for joy
and sing a happy song.

For then I shall be rid of you.

Oh, how I shall triumph
when they lead you off to execution
and put the rope around your necks!

Osmin's Aria from *Abduction from the Seraglio* - 2

You may sneak away quietly and carefully,
you confounded harem mice,
but we can hear you
and before you can escape
we will trap you
and give you what you deserve.

Oh, how I shall triumph
when they lead you off to execution
and put the rope around your necks!

Italy, 1816 Giochino Rossini

**Figaro's Cavatina, "Largo al
factotum!" from *The Barber of
Seville***

(Opera Buffa)

Tito Gobbi (br) - 1958
Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus,
Roberto Benaglio , cond.

What's Happening – 1816

- ◆ Beethoven Symphonies 7 & 8 – 1812
- ◆ Goya, Ingres, Turner active
- ◆ George Stevenson, first practical railroad locomotive – 1814
- ◆ Battle of New Orleans – 1815
- ◆ Wordsworth, Jane Austen, Byron, Shelley active
- ◆ Erie Canal started – 1817 (-1825)

1816 – The Barber of Seville

Gioachino Rossini, 1792-1868

Libretto by Cesare Sterbini after a play by Pierre de Beaumarchais.

First Performance, 1816, Rome

The wily barber, Figaro, assists Count Almaviva in winning the hand of Rosina and thwarting her self-serving guardian, Don Bartolo

Figaro introduces himself, and lets us know what a fine and clever fellow he is.

"Largo al factotum!" from Barber of Seville

La ran la le ra la ran la la . . .

Make way for the factotum of the city, rushing to his shop, for dawn is here.

What a merry life, what gay pleasures for a barber of quality. Ah, bravo Figaro, Bravo, bravissimo, bravo!

Most fortunate of men, Indeed you are! Ready for everything by night or by day, always in bustle, in constant motion. A better lot for a barber, a nobler life does not exist.

"Largo al factotum!" from Barber of Seville - 2

Razors and combs, lancets and scissors, at my command everything's ready. Then there are "extras," Part of my trade, business for ladies and cavaliers...

Ah, what a merry life, what gay pleasures, for a barber of quality. All call for me, all want me, ladies and children, old men and maidens. I need a wig, I want a shave, leeches to bleed me, Here, take this note. All call for me, all want me, I need a wig, I want a shave, here, take this note. Ho, Figaro' Heavens! what a to-do! Heavens! What a crowd!

One at a time, for pity's sake. Ho, Figaro! I am here! Figaro here, Figaro there, Figaro up, Figaro down. I am as quick as lightning. Make way for the factotum of the city.

"Largo al factotum!" from *The Barber of Seville* - 3

Ah, bravo, Figaro, bravo, bravissimo, most fortunate of men, indeed you are. On you good fortune will always smile. I am the factotum of the city. Ah! what a happy life! Little fatigue, and much amusement, always with some money in my pocket.

Noble fruition of my reputation. So it is: without Figaro not a girl in Seville can marry; to me come the little widows for a husband; with the excuse of my comb by day, of my guitar by night, to all, and I say it without boasting, I honestly give service. Oh, what a life, what a trade! Now, away to the shop.

Germany, 1821 Carl Maria von Weber

**"Hat denn der Himmel mich verlassen . . .
Jetzt ist wohl ihr Fenster offen"** from
Der Freischütz
(*Singspiel*)

Peter Schreier (t) - 1973
Staatskapelle Dresden, Carlos Kleiber, cond.

What's Happening – 1821

- ◆ Napoleon dies – 1821
- ◆ Simon Bolivar defeats Spanish army in Venezuela – 1821
- ◆ Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* – 1821
- ◆ Charles Wheatstone demonstrates sound reproduction – 1821
- ◆ Schubert *Symphony 8*, - 1822
- ◆ Boston streets get gaslight – 1822

Der Freischütz

Carl Maria von Weber, 1786-1826

Libretto by Johann Friedrich Kind after a tale in *Gespensterbuch* by Apel and Laun (1811).

First Performance, 1821, Berlin

To win a shooting competition and the hand of his beloved, a young hunter, Max, obtains a magic bullet from the diabolical Samiel.

Max despairs of his bad luck in the hunt, rhapsodizes over his lover and wonders if he has been abandoned by Heaven.

"Hat den der Himmel . . ." from Der Freischütz

Max is alone. Later Samiel enters, almost super-human in height, dressed in dark green and flame colour with gold. His tall hat decked with a cock's feather almost hides his dark yellow face.

Recitative:

MAX

Has heaven forsaken me then?

(Samiel, almost motionless. takes a step out of the bushes in the background.)

Providence turned away its eyes?

(in desperation)

Must ruin overtake me?

Have I fallen into the hands of chance?

(Samiel disappears again)

"Hat den der Himmel . . ." from Der Freischütz

Aria:

(Looking toward Agatha's house.)

Her window is open now,

And she is listening for my step;

Trusting ever in the hope:

Max brings good omens with him!

When the leaves rustle and stir,

She will know it's my footstep

Jumps for joy, waves towards me -

But her loving greeting is only for the leaves.

"Hat den der Himmel . . ." from Der Freischütz

(In the background Samiel walks slowly across the stage with long strides.)

But powers at darkness are weaving about me.
Despair clutches, mockery torments me!
O, will no ray pierce through this night?
Does fate rule blind? Is there no God?

(Samiel, now at the opposite side, makes a convulsive movement at the last word and vanishes.)

Despair clutches, mockery torments me!

Italy, 1853 Giuseppe Verdi

**"Folie! Delirio vano è questo! . . .
Sempre libera" from *La Traviata***

Ileana Cotrubas - 1977

Staatskapelle Dresden, Carlos Kleiber,
cond.

What's Happening – 1853

- ◆ George Eastman born – 1854
- ◆ Corot, Courbet, Turner, Millais active
- ◆ Commodore Perry, first American-Japanese Treaty – 1854
- ◆ Tennyson, *Charge of the Light Brigade* – 1854
- ◆ Professorship of Technology established, Edinburgh University – 1855

La Traviata

Giuseppe Verdi, 1813-1901

Libretto by Francesco Piave after *La dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas *fils* (1852).

First Performance, 1853, Venice

A beautiful but insecure call girl tries but fails tragically to find true happiness in 19th century Paris.

Violetta finds herself falling in love with Alfredo, but refuses to allow herself to do so, instead seeking refuge in frivolous pleasure.

"Sempre Libera" from *La Traviata*

VIOLETTA:

Recitative

It's madness! It's empty delirium!

A poor, lonely woman, abandoned in this
teeming desert they call Paris!

What can I hope? What should I do?

Enjoy myself! Plunge into the vortex
Of pleasure and drown there!

Enjoy myself!

"Sempre Libera" - 2

Aria

Free and aimless I must flutter

From pleasure to pleasure,

Skimming the surface

Of life's primrose path.

As each day dawns,

As each day dies,

Gaily I turn to the new delights

That make my spirit soar.

"Sempre Libera" - 3

ALFREDO

(outside the window)

Love is the pulse. . .

VIOLETTA

Oh!

ALFREDO

. . . of the whole world. . .

VIOLETTA

Yes! Love!

ALFREDO

. . . mysterious, unattainable, the torment and delight of my heart.

VIOLETTA

It's madness! Pleasure!

{repeats Aria}

Germany, 1862 Richard Wagner

Magic Fire Music from *Die Walküre*

Hans Hotter (bbr) - 1959

Vienna Philharmonic, Sir Georg Solti,
cond.

What's Happening – 1862

- ◆ Garibaldi proclaims Victor Emmanuel II King of Italy – 1860
- ◆ Manet, Degas active
- ◆ Foucault measures speed of light – 1862
- ◆ Louis Pasteur invents pasteurization – 1864
- ◆ Ludwig Köchel publishes *Catalog of Mozart's Works* – 1862
- ◆ Bizet, *Pearlfishers* – 1863

Die Walküre

Richard Wagner, 1813-1883

Libretto by composer.

First Performance, 1862, Vienna

Part 2 of *The Ring of the Nibelung* based on the 13th century epic *Nibelungenlied*.

Wotan, king of the Gods, has condemned his beloved daughter, Brünhilde, the Valkyrie, to mortality. He protects her sleeping body by magic flames, calling upon Loge, the God of Fire.

Magic Fire Music

*{Wotan, standing before the rock upon which
Brünhilde, in full armor, lies asleep}*

Loge, hear me! Harken here!

As I found you first, a fiery blaze, as once you vanished
from me, a random fire: as I allied with you, so today
I conjure you!

Arise, magic flame, girdle the rock with fire for me!

{Strikes his spear on the rock}

Loge! Loge! Come here!

{Magic flames surround Brünhilde's Rock}

Whosoever fears the tip of my spear shall never pass
through the fire!

{Curtain falls}

France, 1883 Leo Delibes

"Viens, Mallika" from Lakmé (excerpt)

Mady Mesplé (s), Danielle Millet (ms) -
1970

Orchestra of the Théâtre National de
l'Opéra-Comique, Alain Lombard,
cond.

What's Happening – 1883

- ◆ Manet dies, Utrillo born – 1883
- ◆ Monet, Cezanne active
- ◆ Tchaikovsky, *1812 Overture* – 1882
- ◆ Brooklyn Bridge opens – 1883
- ◆ GB Shaw, Victorien Sardou, Ibsen active
- ◆ Edison designs first hydroelectric plant, Appleton, WI – 1882
- ◆ Lord Kelvin, *On the Size of Atoms* – 1883

Lakmé

Leo Delibes, 1836-1891

Libretto by Edmond Gondinet and Phillipe Gille after the novel *Le mariage de Loti* by Pierre Loti (1882).

First Performance, 1883, Paris

The doomed love between a Brahmin princess and a British officer in 19th century India.

Lakmé and her faithful maid, Mallika, prepare to travel down the river to town.

"Viens, Mallika" from *Lakmé*

LAKMÉ:

Come, Mallika, the flowering vines
Are now their shadows throwing
Along the sacred stream,
That calmly here is flowing;
Enlivened by the songs of birds amid the pines.

MALLIKA:

O mistress, dear! it is now
- When I behold you smiling,
In this blessed hour, no cares beguiling,
That your oft-closed heart
I may read. Lakmé! and more music.

Russia, 1898 Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov **Sadko's Triumphant Farewell from** *Sadko*

Vladimir Galusin (t) - 1994
Kirov Chorus and Orchestra, Valery
Gergiev , cond.

What's Happening – 1898

- ◆ Brahms dies – 1897
- ◆ JJ Thomson discovers the electron – 1897
- ◆ Spanish American War – 1898
- ◆ Rodin, H Rousseau, Matisse, Cezanne, Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec active
- ◆ First magnetic recordings of sound – 1899
- ◆ Czar Nicholas II visits Paris and London – 1896

Sadko

Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

Libretto by Composer and Vladimir Ivanovich Bel'sky after a *bylina* from 11th cent. Novgorod Cycle.

First Performance, 1898, Moscow

The minstrel Sadko makes his fortune as a merchant with the magical aid of the daughter of the Ocean God.

Sadko, having gained the money for a shop, triumphantly says farewell to his fellow citizens of Novgorod.

Sadko's Triumphant Farewell

{Sadko triumphantly boards his ship, as his wife weeps}

SADKO *(a capella)*

The height, 'tis the celestial height,
The depth, 'tis the depth of the Ocean
Sea,
broad is the expanse over the whole
world,
deep are the Dnepr pools.

Sadko's Triumphant Farewell - 2

SADKO and CREW *(a capella)*

From out of the sea, the blue sea, thirty ships set out,
thirty ships, and one ship is of the young nightingale,
herald of dawn.

The ships are fine and lavishly adorned, and the Falcon
ship, the Falcon ship is the most beautiful of all.

SADKO, CREW and VILLAGERS *(with orchestra)*

On the bench sits the handsome lad,
and he is not the Nightingale, herald of dawn,
but the glorious rich merchant trader
the young Nightingale, Sadko.

Sadko's Triumphant Farewell - 3

SADKO and CREW (*as the ship sails away*):

The height, 'tis the celestial height, the depth, 'tis the Ocean Sea
depth,
the broad expanse over the whole world, deep are the Dnepr
pools.

SADKO'S WIFE:

Come forth, damp mother earth.
Cover me up, deserted widow.

TOWNSPEOPLE:

The broad expanse over the whole world, deep, deep are the
Dnepr pools.
Even deeper is the blue sea, the blue Ocean Sea!
Blue Ocean Sea!

Italy, 1924 Giacomo Puccini

**Liù's Aria, "Ascolta, signore", from
*Turandot***

Renata Tebaldi (s) - 1960

Rome Opera Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf,
cond.

What's Happening – 1924

- ◆ Puccini dies – 1924
- ◆ Poulenc, Ravel, Sibelius, Berg, Fauré, Janáček, Schönberg active
- ◆ Kandinsky, Picasso, Vlaminck, Braque, Chagall, de Chirico active
- ◆ Mussolini elected in Italy – 1924
- ◆ Zworikin files patent for iconoscope (TV camera tube) – 1924
- ◆ Heisenberg, Bohr publish quantum theory – 1925

Turandot

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni after a play by Carlo Gozzi (1762).

Score completed by Franco Alfano

First Performance, 1926, Milan

Ancient China. Prince Calaf accepts the challenge of three riddles and melts the heart of the cruel Princess Turandot.

The faithful slave girl, Liù, pleads with Calaf to consider his father and her, and not take the challenge.

Liù's Aria, "Ascolte, signore . . ."

LIÙ:

My lord, hear me! O, hear, my lord!

Liù can bear no more, her heart is breaking!

Alas, how many miles have I walked with your
name in my heart, with your name on my
lips!

But if your fate tomorrow be decided we shall
die on the path of exile.

He will lose a son . . . I, the remembrance of a
smile.

Liù can bear no more! Have pity!

Russia, 1934 Dmitri Shostakovitch

**"The foal runs after the filly" from
*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk***

Galina Vishnevskaya (s) - 1979

London Philharmonic Orchestra, Mstislav
Rostropovich , cond.

What's Happening – 1934

- ◆ Hitler Appointed Chancellor, Stalin in power – 1933
- ◆ Court Ruling Permits James Joyce, *Ulysses* in US – 1933
- ◆ Philo Farnsworth, Electronic TV – 1933
- ◆ Harold Urey, Nobel Prize for discovering deuterium – 1934
- ◆ Orwell, GB Shaw, HG Wells, Sinclair Lewis, Sean O'Casey, Eugene O'Neill active
- ◆ Britten, Rachmaninoff, Delius, Hindemith, R Strauss, A Copland, Prokofiev, Honegger active

Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk

Dmitri Shostakovitch (1906-1975)

Libretto by Alexander Preis and the composer after a short story by Nicolai Leskov (1865).

First Performance, 1934, Leningrad (St. Petersburg)

Pre-Soviet Russia: Abused, neglected wife kills her husband and father-in-law, is apprehended and dies in a Siberian prison.

Katerina expresses her loneliness and despair.

"The foal runs after the filly . . ."

KATERINA:

{Undresses for bed}

The foal runs after the filly.

The tom-cat seeks the female.

The dove hastens to his mate.

But no one hurries to me.

The wind caresses the birch-tree.

And the sun warms it with his heat

For everyone there's a smile from somewhere.

But no one will come to me.

"The foal runs after the filly . . ." - 2

No one will put his hand round my waist.

No one will press his lips to mine.

No one will stroke my white breast.

No one will tire me out with his passionate
embraces.

The days go by in a joyless procession.

My life will flash past without a smile.

No one, no one will ever come to me.

No one will come to me.

England, 1945

Benjamin Britten

"Old Joe went fishing . . ." from
Peter Grimes

Jon Vickers (t) - 1978

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Sir
Colin Davis, cond.

What's Happening – 1945

- ◆ D-Day, Allies invade Normandy – 1944
- ◆ WWII Ends – 1945
- ◆ Waksman & Schatz discover streptomycin – 1943
- ◆ Picasso, Rouault, D Rivera, H Moore, P Mondrian, FL Wright, J Epstein, Kandinsky
- ◆ R Strauss, *Metamorphosen* – 1945
- ◆ Mascagni dies – 1945
- ◆ Eckert & Mauchley, ENIAC, at University of Pennsylvania – 1946
- ◆ C Carlson invents Xerography – 1946

Peter Grimes

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Libretto by Montagu Slater after the poem *The Borough* by George Crabbe (1810).

First Performance, 1945, London

Peter Grimes, a misfit fisherman, struggles with the people of his village and his own private demons after the death of his apprentice.

To prevent an impending fight, tavern customers break into a song.

"Old Joe went fishing"

NED BALSTRODE

For peace's sake, someone start a song.

ALL

Old Joe has gone fishing and
Young Joe has gone fishing and

AUNTIE (The Tavern Owner)

(That's right, Ned!)

ALL

You Know has gone fishing and
Found them a shoal.
Pull them in in handfuls,
And in canfuls,
And in panfuls,
Bring them in sweetly,
Gut them completely,
Pack them up neatly,
Sell them discreetly,
Oh, haul a-way.

"Old Joe went fishing"

PETER

(enters round, silencing the others)

When I had gone fishing
When he had gone fishing
When You Know'd gone fishing
He found us Davy Jones.
Bring him in with horror,
Bring him in with terror,
And bring him in with sorrow!
Oh, haul a-way.

ALL

{continue the round}

{The door opens – a storm outside}

USA, 1979 Stephen Sondheim

**Epilog from *Sweeney Todd, the
Demon Barber of Fleet Street***

Len Cariou (br), Angela Lansbury (s) and
Original Broadway Cast - 1979

What's Happening – 1979

- ◆ Jimmy Carter elected – 1976
- ◆ US & PRC full diplomatic relations – 1978
- ◆ Joyce Carol Oates, H Wouk, Mario Puzo, Jerzy Kosinski, John Cheever active
- ◆ Carlisle Floyd, G-C Menotti, K Penderecki, S Barber active
- ◆ First “test-tube baby” born in England – 1978
- ◆ US launches Venus probe – 1977

Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

Stephen Sondheim (1930-)

Libretto by Hugh Wheeler after *Sweeney Todd* by Christopher Bond. Lyrics by composer

First Performance, 1979, New York

Victorian England. Demented barber seeks revenge by killing his customers.

Finale: Recapitulation of the play.

Epilog to *Sweeney Todd*

Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd.
His skin was pale and his eye was odd.

He shaved the faces of gentlemen
Who never thereafter were heard at again.
He trod a path that few have trod.
Did Sweeney Todd,
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.

He kept a shop in London town,
Of fancy clients and good renown.

Epilog to *Sweeney Todd* - 2

And what if none of their souls was saved?
They went to their maker impeccably shaved
By Sweeney,
By Sweeney Todd,
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.

Swing your razor wide, Sweeney!
Hold it to the skies
Freely flow the blood of those
Who moralize!

Epilog to *Sweeney Todd* - 3

His needs are few, his room is bare
He hardly uses his fancy chair.
The more he bleeds, the more he lives.
He never forgets and he never forgives
Perhaps today you gave a nod
To Sweeney Todd,
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

Sweeney wishes the world away,
Sweeney's weeping for yesterday
Hugging the blade, waiting the years,
Hearing the music that nobody hears.
Sweeney waits in the parlor hall,
Sweeney leans on the office wall,
No one can help, nothing can hide you -
Isn't that Sweeney there beside you?

Epilog to *Sweeney Todd* - 4

Sweeney wishes the world away,
Sweeney's weeping for yesterday,
Is Sweeney!
There he is, it's Sweeney!
Sweeney! Sweeney!
(pointing around the theater)
There! There! There! There!
Them! There! There!
(pointing to the grave)
There!

Epilog to *Sweeney Todd* - 5

(Todd and Mrs. Lovett rise from the grave)

Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd!
He served a dark and a hungry god!
To seek revenge may lead to hell,
But everyone does it, and seldom as well

As Sweeney

As Sweeney Todd,

The Demon Barber of Fleet...

(They start to exit.)

Street!

(They vanish.)

Recent Operas to Watch For

◆ John Adams, *Nixon in China* – 1987

◆ André Previn, *A Streetcar Named Desire*
– 1998

◆ John Corigliano, *The Ghosts of Versailles* – 1991

◆ William Bolcom, *A View From the Bridge*
- 1999

◆ Jake Heggie, *Dead Man Walking* – 2000

The Future of Opera?



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Thank You



And Good Night!

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