



Vincerò!
Piotr Beczala

ORQUESTRA DE LA COMUNITAT VALENCIANA
MARCO BOEMI



VINCERÒ!

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924): Tosca (1900)

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------|
| 1 | Recondita armonia | 2. 47 |
| 2 | E lucevan le stelle | 4. 15 |

Francesco Cilea (1866-1950): Adriana Lecouvreur (1902)

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-------|
| 3 | La dolcissima effigie | 2. 03 |
| 4 | L'anima ho stanca | 1. 54 |
| 5 | Il russo Mèncikoff ** | 1. 55 |

Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945): Cavalleria rusticana (1890)

- | | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 6 | Intanto amici ... Viva il vino spumeggiante * & ** | 3. 01 |
| 7 | Mamma, quel vino è generoso (Addio alla madre) * | 3. 43 |

Giacomo Puccini: Manon Lescaut (1893)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------|
| 8 | Donna non vidi mai | 2. 24 |
| 9 | Tra voi, belle ** | 1. 30 |

Umberto Giordano (1867-1948): Andrea Chénier (1896)

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 10 | Come un bel dì di maggio | 2. 50 |
| 11 | Un dì all'azzurro spazio (Improvviso) | 5. 00 |

Umberto Giordano: Fedora (1898)

- | | | |
|----|---------------|-------|
| 12 | Amor ti vieta | 1. 41 |
|----|---------------|-------|

Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919): Pagliacci (1892)

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-------|
| 13 | Recitar ... Vesti la giubba | 3. 29 |
|----|-----------------------------|-------|

Giacomo Puccini: La Fanciulla del West (1910)

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 14 | Ch'ella mi creda libero e lontano | 1. 49 |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|

Giacomo Puccini: Edgar (1888)

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 15 | Orgia, chimera dall'occhio vitreo | 4. 54 |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|

Giacomo Puccini: Gianni Schicchi (1918)

- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 16 | Avete torto ... Firenze è come un albero fiorito | 3. 11 |
|----|--|-------|

Giacomo Puccini: Madama Butterfly (1904/1907)

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|-------|
| 17 | Addio fiorito asil | 1. 59 |
|----|--------------------|-------|

Giacomo Puccini: Turandot (1926)

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|-------|
| 18 | Nessun dorma ** | 3. 22 |
|----|-----------------|-------|

Total playing time: 52.56

Piotr Beczala, tenor

* **Evgeniya Khomutova**, mezzo-soprano (Centre de Perfeccionament Plácido Domingo)

** **Cor de la Generalitat Valenciana**

Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana

Conducted by **Marco Boemi**



My new exciting project for 2020 is my recording of Verismo arias, 'Vincerò!', for my partners and friends at the 'Label of the Year' PENTATONE. With their trust and support, and together with Maestro Marco Boemi and the Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana, I am embarking on a new journey by discovering some of the greatest tenor characters in opera – such as Turiddu, Canio, Andrea Chénier, and of course Calaf. Thanks to my experience from singing the more lyrical roles, I am able to take on the challenge with my own style and expression, putting it all into practice and venture a step further, presenting the enormous expressiveness and variety of colours of Verismo.

In the coming years, works by Giacomo Puccini, Umberto Giordano and Pietro Mascagni will continue to complement my repertoire and I look forward to singing this great music on stage soon!

— **Piotr Beczala**

Vocal portrait of a golden age

The decades around 1900 mark an important transition period in Italian opera composition. With Giuseppe Verdi nearing his retirement, there were neither immediate successors, nor a clear sense of direction from a stylistic point of view. For the first time in history there was a strong interest in German symphonic music and particularly in the music dramas of Wagner, but conservative forces feared that the German muse might alienate Italian composers from their roots. During those years a new generation of composers — the so-called *Giovane scuola* — entered the scene, and gradually managed to blend several currents into a new, unmistakably Italian operatic style. This style entails a Wagnerian tendency towards the symphonic and through-composed; French refinement à la Massenet; incorporation of musical exoticism and — last but not least — Verismo: the raw, emotionally-charged musical depiction of common folk.

The term Verismo is often, but unjustly, used to categorize all Italian turn-of-the-century opera, but the music presented on this album demonstrates how much more diverse and interesting that period was. Moreover, this is also the period when the tenor, more than ever before, took centre stage. Many of the most popular tenor arias were composed in the years around 1900, and the selection of arias by Giacomo Puccini and his contemporaries presented on this album reflects that bloom.

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) gradually evolved into the most important turn-of-the-century Italian opera composer. It took quite some time, however, until Puccini surpassed his colleagues in popularity. His first opera *Le Villi* (1883) was generally seen as a promising start, even if the old Verdi was worried about the allegedly overly-symphonic (read: German) character of the work, and Puccini's publisher Giulio Ricordi expressed his hope that Puccini would not forget his Italian roots. After the one-act

Le Villi, Puccini composed his first full-evening entertainment with *Edgar* (1888), on a libretto by Ferdinando Fontana. The medieval subject reveals Puccini's German, and particularly Wagnerian, inclination. Edgar, like Wagner's Tannhäuser, is torn between his love for an immaculate woman and his attraction to a sensuous femme fatale, whose gipsy identity seems inspired by Bizet's *Carmen* (1875). And just as Wagner in the case of *Tannhäuser*, Puccini kept changing the work, without ever finding an ideal shape. Despite Puccini's doubts about *Edgar*, some arias already reveal his exceptional gift for melody and theatrical effect. Among them is 'Orgia, chimera dall'occhio vitreo', in which Edgar's inner conflict is presented. Edgar hears the sounds of an orgy from a palace, and thinks about his fatal attraction to the seductress Tigrana. A broad, melancholic melody is introduced in the clarinet and then repeated by the orchestra, after which Edgar's outburst of despair is underscored by dark and dissonant sounds. The sky

eventually clears when he thinks of the chaste Fidelia.

Edgar did not bring Puccini the hoped-for consolidation of his reputation, and soon afterwards, his younger colleague and former roommate Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945) became an overnight star with *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890). This work introduced Verismo to the opera world. The opera presents a tragic, violent love story set in a rural Sicilian community with powerful, directly appealing music. 'Viva il vino spumeggiante' and 'Mamma, quel vino è generoso' are both part of the opera's finale. In the former, Turiddu drinks away his worries after his beloved Santuzza has confronted him with his adultery. The folk-like aria's mood is sunny and the choir joins in with Turiddu's joy, but the dramatic context casts its shadows over this party scene. Soon afterwards, his amorous rival Alfio arrives and the two agree on a duel. In 'Mamma, quel vino è generoso', Turiddu sings a goodbye to his mother just before

the duel, asking her to take care of Santuzza in case he doesn't return. The wine now no longer brings joy, but melancholia and vertigo. Tremolo strings express Turiddu's anxiety. With an expansive melody, he asks his mother — who doesn't understand what's going on — for a last kiss goodbye. He leaves, and Alfio stabs him to death.

In 1892, Ruggero Leoncavallo (1858-1919) wrote *Pagliacci*, which would become the standard companion piece of Mascagni's *Cavalleria*. Both pieces depict tragic love stories of common folk, but the structure of Leoncavallo's play-in-a-play is arguably more ingenious. It shows Canio, leader of a travelling troupe of clowns, who discovers that his wife, who's supposed to cheat on him in the theatre show, does the same in real life. Canio takes real revenge during the performance. His aria 'Vesti la giubba', sung after he has found out about his wife's secret love, contemplates the artist's life and the tragedy of human existence: whatever happens, we have to wear our masks, laugh,

and act as if nothing happened. Canio exclaims the word "ridi" (laugh!) with one of the most famous tenor sobs; a cruel counterpoint.

Manon Lescaut (1894) brought Puccini his first big operatic success, even if its genesis was rather problematic, with no less than seven librettists involved, none of whom was mentioned on the title page. The opera was inspired by Massenet's opera *Manon* (1884) and — just as its French predecessor — was based on Abbé Prevost's *Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (1731). Given the chevalier's dramatic prominence, as well as the several musical highlights for the tenor, Puccini might as well have named his opera after the male lead. The story shows how Manon is torn between her love for Des Grieux and her desire for wealth and jewellery, which ultimately causes her banishment to America and death from dehydration, albeit in the arms of her beloved. 'Tra voi, belle' and 'Donna non vidi

mai' demonstrate how a casual meeting with Manon transforms Des Grieux from a slightly cynical and free-floating Casanova into a sentimental lover. 'Trai voi, belle' offers a playful melody accompanied by pizzicati, to which woodwinds and harp are added when Des Grieux feigns romantic adoration. In the lyrical, voluptuously orchestrated 'Donna non vidi mai' he turns out to be a romantic indeed.

Umberto Giordano's (1867-1948) *Andrea Chénier* (1896) is also situated in eighteenth-century France. Luigi Illica loosely based his libretto on the life of the French poet André Chénier, who was executed during the French Revolution. 'Un di all azurro spazio' is an improvised poem that Chénier reluctantly sings during a luxurious ball. It starts idyllically, but when he laments the conditions of the poor and the crimes of church and nobility, everyone is shocked. 'Come un bel di di maggio' follows the same trajectory, from idyll to emotional outburst, but now it's his own fate that Chénier

laments. Despite his sympathy for the deprived, the Revolutionaries consider him an enemy and order his execution. Luckily, his beloved Maddalena joins him, and they tread triumphantly towards the guillotine at the end of the opera.

After *Andrea Chénier*, Giordano composed *Fedora* (1898), based on a play by Victorien Sardou and written specifically for the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt. Particular to *Fedora* is the Russian setting, which Giordano would use once more in *Siberia* (1903). *Fedora* is a story about star-crossed love, adultery, revenge and destiny. Enrico Caruso sang the premiere and scored a huge success with the aria 'Amor ti vieta', in which count Loris declares his love to Fedora, who plots to have him punished for murdering her fiancé. After a majestic orchestral introduction with sweeping parallel chords, a short, passionately lyrical melody is sung.

When writing *Tosca* (1900), Puccini may well have been inspired by Giordano's two

successful operas (for this opera he worked with Luigi Illica, who had also written the text for *Andrea Chénier*). Like *Fedora*, *Tosca* was also based on a play by Sardou with Sarah Bernhardt creating the title role. Just as *Andrea Chénier*, Puccini's opera takes place during the French Revolution, and shows how an artist with progressive views is executed, in this case by the *ancien régime*. The dramatic context of the aria 'E lucevan le stelle', moreover, is exactly the same as that of 'un bel dì di Maggio': an impatient guard urges the artist on death row to finish writing his ardent goodbye to his beloved. The strings provide recollections of better days, after which reality kicks in with a melancholic clarinet melody that evokes the atmosphere of Edgar's 'Orgia'. Throughout the aria accompaniment is sparse and the instruments join the vocal melody, as if to increase the bare, desolate atmosphere. At various points the music subtly alludes to Wagner's Tristan chord to evoke the sense of tragic love and death. In comparison 'Recondita armonia', from the

beginning of the opera, shows the painter Mario Cavaradossi as an uncomplicated admirer of female beauty in all its forms.

Just as *Tosca*, Francesco Cilea's (1866-1950) *Adriana Lecouvreur* (1902) revolves around a diva, in this case of the spoken theatre. The slightly fuzzy story is about Adriana's love for Maurizio and her amorous rivalry with the Princesse de Bouillon, who eventually poisons her. Maurizio sings 'La dolcissima effigie' when he sees Adriana again after a long time. Cilea confines this poetic declaration of love to the tenor's middle register, where the voice is at its most tender, and the melody remains overly lyrical despite its chromaticism. In the elegiac 'L'anima ho stanca', Maurizio explains the Princesse he no longer loves her. 'Il russo Mèncikoff' is Maurizio's narration about a heroic war experience, with drumrolls and trumpets depicting the battle.

In *Madama Butterfly* (1904-1907), Puccini experimented with a Japanese ambience, which he also sought to evoke in his music. Equally experimental was the limited share and highly unsympathetic character that Puccini reserved for the male tenor, the American lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton. The 1904 premiere at La Scala turned into a fiasco, and for later revivals Puccini and his librettists inserted the aria 'Addio fiorito asil' into the final act. Pinkerton sings the aria upon his return to the flowery refuge where he once lived with his Japanese wife. He comes to claim their son, but asks his new wife and the American consul to do this dirty job, afraid as he is to face his former love. Despite the cruelty of the situation, the added aria at least allows Pinkerton to show remorse.

With the "Spaghetti Western" *La Fanciulla del West* (1910), Puccini again chose a non-European subject with ample room for *couleur locale*. It resulted in one of his most modern scores, full of "Impressionist"

harmonies and orchestral colours, as well as novel musical exoticisms. Amidst all that complexity, the completely unchromatic aria 'Ch'ella mi creda libero et lontano' with unisono orchestral accompaniment is a masterful example of what a gifted composer can do with limited means. In its bare quality it resembles 'E lucevan le stelle', but this major-key aria is an act of resolution rather than desperation. The bandit Ramerrez sings it shortly before his execution, asking his prosecutors to tell his beloved Minnie that he's free and far away, rather than dead. In the opera, Minnie arrives as a *deus ex machina* and persuades the community to spare Ramerrez and give him a second chance. Outside the opera house, the aria became a popular song among Italian soldiers during the First World War.

Puccini designed *Gianni Schicchi* as the final, comic part of *Il Trittico* (1918), a piece consisting of three one-act operas with contrasting character. The story of *Gianni*

Schicchi is based on a passage in Dante's *Divina Commedia*, in which a family hopes to inherit the fortune of a deceased uncle, who turns out to have dedicated it to a monastery. In order to marry Lauretta, Rinuccio needs to secure at least part of the inheritance. In 'Avete torto ... Firenze è come un albero fiorito' he proposes to let Lauretta's father Gianni Schicchi fix it, as he's a master of legal tricks. In the aria he challenges his relatives' view that this man from out of town is inferior, arguing that it's actually thanks to newcomers that Florence blooms. Rinuccio starts slightly agitated but lights up when describing the city's splendour, with the orchestra playing a premonition of Lauretta's later aria 'O mio babbino caro', one of opera's most famous melodies.

The same can be said of 'Nessun Dorma'. Puccini wrote it for *Turandot* (1926), his last, unfinished opera, eventually completed by Franco Alfano. *Turandot* is a fairy-tale about a Chinese princess refusing to marry,

unless her suitor solves three riddles. If he fails, he dies. Calaf is the first to solve all three, and when she still refuses, he asks her to answer one riddle instead: to tell him what his name is before the break of dawn. Turandot demands that all her subjects stay awake and pry the secret out of the unknown prince. Special about the music of *Turandot* is Puccini's use of techniques from grand opera, as well as his *chinoiseries*. In 'Nessun Dorma' Calaf expresses his conviction that he will overcome, and that Turandot will eventually love him. The orchestra paints the nocturnal atmosphere with wave-like movements in the strings, while the vocal melody gradually prepares the rise to a euphoric high b: one of the most feared, yet also most rewarding notes of the tenor repertoire.

Kasper van Kooten



Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924): Tosca (1900)

Recondita armonia

Recondita armonia
di bellezze diverse! È bruna Floria,
l'ardente amante mia ...

E te, beltade ignota ...
cinta di chiome bionde,
tu azzurro hai l'occhio,
Tosca ha l'occhio nero!

L'arte nel suo mistero
le diverse bellezze insiem confonde;
ma nel ritrar costei
il mio solo pensiero, Tosca, sei tu!

1

Oh hidden harmony
of contrasting beauties! Floria
is dark, my love and passion ...

And you, mysterious beauty ...
crowned with blond locks.
Your eyes are blue
and Tosca's black!

Dissimilar beauties are together blended
by the mystery of art:
yet as I paint her portrait, Tosca,
my sole thought is of you.

2

E lucevan le stelle

E lucevan le stelle
ed olezzava la terra,
stridea l'uscio dell'orto,
e un passo sfiorava la rena ...

And the stars shone
and the earth was perfumed.
The gate to the garden creaked
and a footstep rustled the sand path ...

Entrava ella, fragrante,
mi cadea fra le braccia ...
Oh, dolci baci, o languide carezze,
mentr'io fremente
le belle forme disciogliea dai veli!
Svani per sempre il sogno mio d'amore ...
L'ora è fuggita ...
E muoio disperato!
E non ho amato mai tanto la vita!

Fragrant, she entered
and fell into my arms ...
Oh, soft kisses, oh, sweet abandon,
as I, trembling,
unloosed her veils and disclosed her beauty.
Oh, vanished forever is that dream of love,
fled is that hour ...
and desperately I die.
And never before have I loved life so much!

Francesco Cilea (1866-1950): Adriana Lecouvreur (1902)

3

La dolcissima effigie

La dolcissima effigie sorridente
in te rivedo della madre cara;
nel tuo cor della mia patria, dolce, preclara
l'aura ribevo, che m'aprì la mente ...
Bella tu sei, come la mia bandiera,
delle pugne fiammante entro i vapor;
tu sei gioconda, come la chimera
della Gloria, promessa al vincitor ...
Bella tu sei, tu sei gioconda ...
Sì! Amor mi fa poeta ...

In you I see again
the smiling image of my dear mother.
With you I breathe the sweet, clear air
of my fatherland, where I was born ...
You are beautiful as my banner,
flaming aloft in battle;
you are joyous as the spectre
of Glory promised to the victor.
You are beautiful, you are joyous ...
Yes! Love makes me a poet.

L'anima ho stanca

L'anima ho stanca, e la mèta è lontana:
non aggiungete la rampogna
vana all'ansia che m'accora ...
Assai vi debbo; ah!
Ma se amor cadrà,
mèmore affetto in cor mi fiorirà! ...

Il russo Mèncikoff**Maurizio**

Il russo Mèncikoff riceve l'ordine
di còrmi in trappola nel mio palagio ...
Era un esercito contro un manipolo,
un contro quindici ...
Ma, come a Bèndera Carlo duodecimo,
nemici o soci contar non so ...

Coro

Gloria a Maurizio, gloria al valor!

4

My soul is weary, and I am far from my goal.
Do not add vain reproach
to the anguish that afflicts me ...
I owe you so much;
but if love dies ...
grateful affection will blossom in my heart

5

Maurizio

The Russian Menchikoff, was ordered
to trap me in my palace ...
It was an army against a handful,
fifteen to one ...
But like Charles XII at Benderey,
I could count neither friends nor enemies ...

Chorus

Glory to Maurizio, and to his bravery!

Maurizio

I miei s'appiattano
dietro ogni ostacolo ...
tre giorni infuria la gaja musica:
tre giorni zufola la morte,
e gongola ...
Alfine i pifferi l'assalto intimano ...
L'istante è tragico ... Come resistere?
Non v'è da scegliere tra piombo e allor ...

Coro

Sassonia avanti!

Maurizio

Le torce fumano:
pronto è l'incendio ...

Coro

Trionfa o muor!

Maurizio

... ma nel vestibolo io stesso rotolo
baril di polvere ...
Stringo la miccia, e ...
cento saltano cosacchi in aria ...

Maurizio

My men crouched
behind the walls ...
for three days the music of battle raged.
For three days Death
sang his song of triumph ...
Finally the fifes announced the attack ...
A dramatic moment: how could we resist?
How to choose between death or glory?

Chorus

Forward, Saxony!

Maurizio

The torches blazed,
my palace was about to burn ...

Chorus

Triumph or death!

Maurizio

... but I rolled barrels
of gunpowder into the hall ...
I lit the fuse,
and a hundred Cossacks were blown up

Gli altri s'arretrano,
gli amici accorrono ...
e qui la storia posso ancor ridir ...

Coro

Viva il coraggio! Viva l'ardir!

The rest retreated,
our allies arrived ...
and I am here to tell the tale ...

Chorus

Hail to his courage! Hail to his bravery!

Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945): Cavalleria rusticana (1890)

Intanto amici ... Viva il vino spumeggiante

Turiddu

Intanto amici, qua,
Beviamone un bicchiere.

Viva il vino spumeggiante
Nel bicchiere scintillante,
Come il riso dell'amante
Mite infonde il giubilo!
Viva il vino ch'è sincero
Che ci allietta ogni pensiero,
E che affoga l'umor nero,
Nell'ebbrezza tenera.

Turiddu

Meanwhile, friends,
Come, let's drink together!

Praise the sparkling wine
bubbling in the glass,
bringing happiness
Like a lover's smile!
Hurrah for friendly wine
that livens every thought
and banishes melancholy
in cheerful drinking!

Coro

Viva

Turiddu

Ai vostri amorii?!

Coro

Viva

Lola

Alla fortuna vostra!

Turiddu

Beviam!

Coro

Rinnovasi la giostra!
Beviam! Beviam! Rinnovasi la giostra!

Viva il vino spumeggiante
Nel bicchiere scintillante,
Come il riso dell'amante
Mite infonde il giubilo!
Viva il vino ch'è sincero
Che ci allietta ogni pensiero,

Chorus

Hurrah!

Turiddu

To your love!

Chorus

Hurrah!

Lola

To your fortune!

Turiddu

Drink!

Chorus

Another round!
Drink! Drink! Another round!

Praise the sparkling wine
bubbling in the glass,
bringing happiness
like a lover's smile!
Hurrah for friendly wine
that livens every thought

E che affoga l'umor nero,
Nell'ebbrezza tenera.

Viva! Beviam!

And banishes melancholy
In cheerful drinking!

Hurrah! Drink!

Mamma, quel vino è generoso

Turiddu

Mamma, quel vino è generoso,
e certo oggi troppi bicchieri
Ne ho tracannati ...
Vado fuori all'aperto.
Ma prima voglio
Che mi benedite
Come quel giorno
Che partii soldato.
E poi ... mamma ... sentite ...
S'io ... non tornassi ...
Voi dovrete fare
Da madre a Santa,
Ch'io le avea giurato
Di condurla all'altare.

Turiddu

Mother, that wine is strong,
and in truth I've drunk
too much of it today ...
I must go out into the fields.
But give me first
your blessing,
as you did that day
when I went off as a soldier ...
And then ... mother ... listen ...
If I should not return ...
you must be a mother
to Santuzza,
whom I promised
to lead to the altar.

Lucia

Perché parli così, figliuol mio?

Turiddu

Oh! nulla!
È il vino che mi ha suggerito!
Per me pregate Iddio!
Un bacio, mamma ...
Un altro bacio ... addio!

Lucia

My son, what is this you're saying?

Turiddu

Oh, nothing!
It is the wine within me speaking.
Pray to Heaven for me!
One kiss, mother ...
One more kiss ... farewell!

Giacomo Puccini: Manon Lescaut (1893)

Donna non vidi mai

Donna non vidi mai simile a questa!
A dirle: io t'amo,
a nuova vita l'alma mia si desta
« Manon Lescaut mi chiamo! »
Come queste parole profumate
mi vagan nello spirito
e ascosse fibre vanno a carezzare.
O sussurro gentil, deh! non cessare ...
« Manon Lescaut mi chiamo! »
Sussurro gentil, deh, non cessar!

I've never seen a woman like her!
To tell her: "I love you"
awakenes new life in my soul
"My name is Manon Lescaut"
How those fragrant words
linger in my spirit
and caress hidden chords.
o gentle murmur, may it never cease ...
"My name is Manon Lescaut"
o gentle murmur, may it never cease!

Tra voi, belle

Tra voi, belle, brune e bionde.
Si nasconde giovinetta vaga, vezzosa ...
Dal labbro rosa, me m'aspetta?
Sei tu quella, bionda stella?
Dillo a me!

Palesatemi il destino, e il divino
Viso ardente che m'innamori ...
Ch'io vegga e ... odori ...
Eternamente!

Sei tu quella, bruna stella?
Dillo a me!

9

Among you, beautiful, brown and blonde
is there a graceful young girl
with pink lips waiting for me?
Is it you, you blonde beauty?
Tell me!

Show me my fate, and the divine
shining face I will fall in love with,
which I might gaze upon ... and adore
forever!

Are you the one, you slender Brunette?
Tell me!

Umberto Giordano (1867-1948): Andrea Chénier (1896)

Come un bel dì di maggio

Come un bel dì di maggio
Che con bacio di vento
E carezza di raggio

10

Like a beautiful day in May
that, kissed by the wind
and caressed by rays of sun

Si spegne in firmamento
Col bacio io d'una rima
Carezza di poesia
Salgo l'estrema cima
De l'esistenza mia

La sfera che cammina
per ogni umana sorte
Ecco già mi avvicina
all'ora della morte
E forse pria che l'ultima
mia strofe sia finita
M'annuncerà il carnefice,
la fine della vita

Sia! Strofe, ultima Dea
Ancor dona al tuo poeta
La sfolgorante idea
La fiamma consueta
Io, a te, mentre tu vivida a me
Sgorgi dal cuore
Darò per rima il gelido
Spiro d'un uom che muore

dies out in the sky,
I, with the kiss of a rhyme,
and the caress of poetry,
climb the highest peak
of my existence.

The wheel that turns
for every human destiny
has now brought me
to the hour of my death,
and perhaps before the last
of my verses is finished,
the executioner will announce to me
the end of my life.

So be it! Poetry, ultimate Goddess!
grant your poet once more
the brilliant idea,
the usual flame;
While you pour forth from my heart,
full of life, I will give to you
as a rhyme the cold breath
of a man about to die.

Un dì all'azzurro spazio (Improvviso)

Colpito qui m'avete ov'io geloso celo
 il più puro palpitar dell'anima.
 Or vedrete, fanciulla, qual poema
 è la parola "Amor", qui causa di scherno!

Un dì all'azzurro spazio
 guardai profondo,
 e ai prati colmi di viole,
 pioveva loro il sole,
 e folgorava d'oro il mondo:
 pareva la terra un immane tesoro,
 e a lei serviva di scrigno il firmamento.
 Su dalla terra a la mia fronte
 veniva una carezza viva, un bacio.
 Gridai vinto d'amor:
 T'amo tu che mi baci,
 divinamente bella, o patria mia!
 E volli pien d'amore pregar!
 Varcai d'una chiesa la soglia;
 là un prete ne le nicchie
 dei santi e della Vergine,
 accumulava doni -

Impressed here you have me jealously cloaked
 the purest palpitation of the soul.
 Now you will see, maiden, what a poem
 it is the word "Amor", here cause of mockery!

One day when the sky was blue
 I looked profoundly
 At meadows full of violets,
 the sun was raining them,
 and the world had a golden glow:
 the earth was an immense treasure,
 and the firmament served her as a casket.
 Up from the ground to my forehead
 a live caress came, a kiss.
 I cried, won by love:
 I love you, kiss me,
 divinely beautiful, my homeland!
 And full of love, I wanted to pray!
 I crossed the threshold of a church;
 there a priest in the niches
 of the saints and of the Virgin,
 accumulated gifts -

e al sordo orecchio
 un tremulo vegliardo
 invan chiedeva pane
 e invano stendeva la mano!

Varcai degli abituri l'uscio;
 un uom vi calunniava
 bestemmiando il suolo
 che l'erario a pena sazia
 e contro a Dio scagliava
 e contro agli uomini
 le lagrime dei figli.

In cotanta miseria
 la patrizia prole che fa?
 (a Maddalena)
 Sol l'occhio vostro
 esprime umanamente qui
 un guardo di pietà,
 ond'io guardato ho a voi
 sì come a un angelo.
 E dissi: Ecco la bellezza della vita!
 Ma, poi, a le vostre parole,
 un novello dolor m'ha colto in pieno petto.
 O giovinetta bella,

and to the deaf ear
 a tremulous old man
 helplessly asked for bread
 and in vain stretch out his hand!

I went through the door to the houses;
 a man calumniated you
 cursing the ground
 that the treasury should be satisfied
 and against God he hurled
 and against men
 the tears of the children.

In such misery
 What do the patricians do?
 (to Maddalena)
 Only your eye
 expresses humanity here
 a look of pity,
 I've looked at you
 just like an angel.
 And I said: Here is the beauty of life!
 But then, after your words,
 a new pain caught me in the chest.
 Oh you pretty young girl,

d'un poeta non disprezzate il detto:
Udite! Non conoscete amor,
amor, divino dono, non lo schernir,
del mondo anima e vita è l'Amor!

do not despise the saying of a poet:
Hear! You do not know love,
love, divine gift, not mockery,
Love is the soul and lifeblood of this world!

Umberto Giordano: Fedora (1898)

12

Amor ti vieta

Amor ti vieta di non amar.
La man tua lieve, che mi respinge,
cerca la stretta della mia man;
la tua pupilla esprime: T'amo! "
se il labbro dice: "Non t'amerò!"

Love forbids you to not love.
Your soft hand which rejects me
seeks the tight grip of my hand.
Your pupil expresses "I love you"
even if your lip says "I won't love you".

Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919): Pagliacci (1892)

13

Recitar ... Vesti la giubba

Recitar! Mentre preso dal delirio
Non so più quel che dico e quel che faccio!
Eppur ...è d'uopo ... sforzati!
Bah, se' tu forse un uom!

Perform the play! While I am racked with grief,
not knowing what I say or what I do!
And yet ... I must ... ah, force myself to do it!
Bah! Are you a man?

Tu sei Pagliaccio!

You are a clown!

Vesti la giubba e la faccia infarina.
La gente paga e rider vuole qua.
E se Arlecchin t'invola Colombina,
Ridi Pagliaccio, e ognuno applaudirà!
Tramuta in lazzi lo spasmo ed il pianto;
In una smorfia il singhiozzo e il dolore ...
Ridi Pagliaccio, sul tuo amore infranto!
Ridi del duol che t'avvelena il cor!

Put on your costume, and powder your face:
The people pay and want to laugh.
And if Harlequin steals your Columbine,
laugh, Pagliaccio, and all will applaud you!
Change all your tears and anguish into
clowning:
and into a grimace your sobbing and your
pain ...
Laugh, clown, at your shattered love!
Laugh at the sorrow that poisons your heart!

Giacomo Puccini: La Fanciulla del West (1910)

14

Ch'ella mi creda libero e lontano

Ch'ella mi creda libero e lontano,
sopra una nuova via di redenzione! ...
Aspetterà ch'io torni ...
E passeranno i giorni,
ed io non tornerò ...

Let her believe that I'm free and far away
on a new path towards redemption! ...
She will wait for me to come back ...
And the days will go by.
and I will not come back ...

Minnie, della mia vita mio solo fiore,
Minnie, che m'hai voluto tanto bene! ...
Ah, tu della mia vita mio solo fior!

Minnie, the only flower of my life.
Minnie, you who loved me so much! ...
Ah, you, my only blossom in my life!

Giacomo Puccini: Edgar (1888)

15

Orgia, chimera dall'occhio vitreo

Orgia, chimera dall'occhio vitreo
dal soffio ardente che i sensi incendia,
tu a me, dell'alta notte nel glauco
mister silente, invan ritorni.

The orgy is a glossy illusion
of burning breath that ignites the senses.
In vain, you return to me in the middle of
the night in silent greenish mystery.

Non più dai tuoi sguardi ammaliato
sarà il mio cor!
Ne più m'avvince a te la voluttà.
Ma ho terror del doman;
un vigliacco terror che l'onor mio
combattere non sa!

My heart will no longer be bewitched
By your glances!
I am no longer bound by lust.
But I have fear of tomorrow;
there is a cowardly terror that my honour is
unable to fight!

O soave vision di quell'alba d'april,
o vision gentil d'amore e di splendor!
Nell'abisso fatal, dove caduto io son,
rimpianta vision, Ah!

Oh gentle vision of April's dawn,
oh gentle vision of splendour and love!
I can see the vision I yearn for from the fatal
abyss into which I have fallen!

Te il mio pensiero evoca sempre ancor!
Sovra un sereno cielo si disegna il profil
dolcissimo dell'angiol che mi amò!

You still evoke my thoughts!
The sweet profile of that angel who loved
me is outlined in the serene sky!

Giacomo Puccini: Gianni Schicchi (1918)

16

Avete torto ... Firenze è come un albero fiorito

Avete torto.
È fine, astuto.
Ogni malizia di leggi e codici
conosce e sa.
Motteggiatore! Beffeggiatore!
C'è da fare una beffa nuova e rara?
È Gianni Schicchi che la prepara.
Gli occhi furbi gli illuminan di riso
lo strano viso,
ombreggiato da quel suo gran nasone
che pare un torrachione per così.
Vien dal contado? Ebbene, che vuol dire?
Basta con queste ubbie grette e piccine!

You're mistaken.
He's crafty, astute.
He knows everything about the traps
in the law and the codex.
A wag! A Joker!
A new, rare practical joke going round?
it's Gianni Schicchi who set it up.
Shrewd eyes light up
his funny face with laughter,
and his huge nose throws a shadow
Just like an old ruined tower.
He's from the country? Well, so what?
Enough of this small-minded prejudice!

Firenze è come un albero fiorito,
che in piazza dei Signori ha tronco e fronde,

Florence is like a tree in flower,
with its trunk and branches in the piazza

ma le radici forze nuove apportano
dalle convalli limpide e feconde.
E Firenze germoglia ed alle stelle
salgon palagi saldi e torri snelle!

L'Arno, prima di correre alla foce,
canta baciando piazza Santa Croce,
e il suo canto è sì dolce e sì sonoro
che a lui son scesi i ruscelletti in coro.
Così scendonvi dotti in arti e scienze
a far più ricca e splendida Firenze.
E di Val d'Elsa giù dalle castella
ben venga Arnolfo a far la torre bella.
E venga Giotto dal Mugel selvoso,
e il Medici mercante coraggioso.
Basta con gli odi gretti e coi ripicchi!
Viva la gente nova e Gianni Schicchi!

dei Signori,
but its roots bring new strength in
from the fresh fruitful valleys.
Florence grows and solid palaces
and slim towers rise up to the stars!

Before the Arno runs to the sea,
singing, it kisses the piazza Santa Croce,
and its song is so sweet and resonant
that the streams join in.
In this way artists and scientists have helped
to make Florence richer and more splendid.
And from the castles of Val d'Elsa
Arnolfo has come down to build his beautiful
tower. And Giotto came from leafy Mugel,
and Medici, the valiant merchant.
Enough of narrow-minded malice and spite!
Long live the newcomers and Gianni
Schicchi!

Giacomo Puccini: Madama Butterfly (1904/1907)

17

Addio fiorito asil

Addio, fiorito asil
di letizia e d'amor ...
Sempre il mite suo semblante
con strazio atroce vedrò.

Addio, fiorito asil ...
Non reggo al tuo squallor ...
Fuggo, fuggo ...son vill!

Farewell, flowery home,
full of happiness and love ...
Haunted forever I shall be
by her reproachful eyes.

Farewell, flowery home ...
I cannot face the mess I've made ...
I'm a coward, I have to flee!

Giacomo Puccini: Turandot (1926)

18

Nessun Dorma

Il principe ignoto (Calaf)

Nessun dorma!
Nessun dorma ...
Tu pure, o Principessa,
nella tua fredda stanza
guardi le stelle che tremano
d'amore e di speranza!

The unknown prince (Calaf)

No one may sleep!
No one may sleep ...
You, too, o Princess,
in your cold room
look at the stars, that tremble
with love and with hope!

Ma il mio mistero è chiuso in me,
il nome mio nessun saprà!
No, no, sulla tua bocca lo dirò
quando la luce splenderà!
Ed il mio bacio scioglierà il silenzio
che ti fa mia!

Voci di donne

Il nome suo nessun saprà ...
E noi dovrem, ahimè, morir!

Il principe ignoto (Calaf)

Dilegua, o notte! ...
tramontate, stelle!
All'alba vincerò!
Vincerò! Vincerò!

But my mystery is shut within me;
no one will know my name!
No, I will say it to your mouth
when the daylight shines!
And my kiss will break the silence
that makes you mine!

Women's voices

No one will know his name ...
And, alas, we must die!

The unknown prince (Calaf)

Vanish, o night!
Set, you stars!
At dawn I will overcome!
I will overcome! I will overcome!

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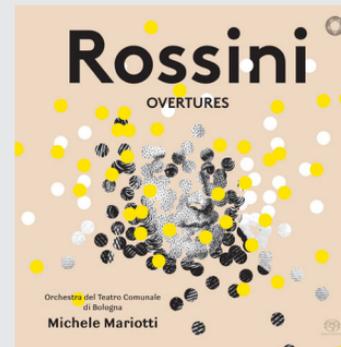
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