

## **Operatic Ensembles 25th March 2017**

### **Brief synopses of extracts**

#### **Monteverdi - L'Orfeo 1607**

##### **Act 4**

Proserpina pleads with Pluto (Plutone) to allow Orpheus to lead Eurydice up to earth to rejoin the living. Pluto consents, but warns that if Orpheus once turns back to look at her she will be lost to him. Unable to conquer his anxiety, he does look back and Eurydice is taken from him and back to the Underworld.

#### **Berlioz - Les Troyens 1863**

##### **Act 2 Scenes IV (part), V and VI - The gardens of Didon by the shore**

Didon (Dido) asks Énée (Aeneas) for more tales of Troy. Aeneas reveals that after some persuading, Andromaque eventually married Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles, who had killed Hector, Andromaque's earlier husband. Dido then feels resolved regarding her lingering feelings about her own late husband, Sychaeus. At one point, Ascanius slips Sychaeus's ring from Dido's finger. Dido retrieves it, but then forgets about it later. Aeneas instructs Dido to banish sad memories, and the pair, with the others, sing of the peace which emanates from the sea breezes.

#### **Verdi - La Forza del destino 1862**

##### **Act 4 Scene 2 - Near the monastery of Hornacuelos in Spain.**

Leonora lives as a hermit in expiation for her involvement in her father's death. Alvaro, her lover, mortally wounds her brother Carlos who has pursued the couple. Alvaro implores the hermit to confess the dying man. Leonora appears and the pair, having lived many years apart, recognise each other. Leonora runs to comfort her brother. He gains his revenge by stabbing her and thus restoring the family honour.

As Leonora dies, she and the Father Superior of the monastery persuade Alvaro to submit to his cruel destiny in the hope of salvation in the life to come

#### **Verdi - Rigoletto 1851**

##### **Act 3 quartet**

The Duke has been lured to a remote inn by Sparafucile's sister Maddalena. Rigoletto has paid Sparafucile to kill the Duke and to deliver his body in a sack so that he may himself throw it into the River Mincio. Rigoletto brings Gilda with him to spy on the inn, hoping to reinforce the notion that the Duke is not a man of honour in affairs of the heart. Gilda is unimpressed

## **Offenbach - The Tales of Hoffmann 1881**

### Act 3

The poet Hoffmann recalls his tormented love for the courtesan Giulietta, who has unhinged him with her charms. Giulietta is not in love with Hoffmann but only seducing him under the orders of Captain Dapertutto, who has promised to give her a diamond if she steals Hoffmann's reflection from a mirror. The jealous Schlemil, a previous victim of Giulietta and Dapertutto (he gave Giulietta his shadow), along with her servant Pitichinaccio, join forces to mock Hoffmann's gullibility. Only his companion Nicklausse and the chorus pity his fate, which has turned his heaven to hell.

## **Leoncavallo - La Bohème 1897**

### Act 3

La Bohème is an Italian opera in four acts, with music and libretto by Ruggero Leoncavallo, based on Scènes de la Vie de Bohème by Henri Murger.

Leoncavallo wrote his opera La Bohème contemporaneously with Giacomo Puccini's own treatment of the same story.

Puccini's version has become a standard in the operatic repertoire, whereas Leoncavallo's opera is rarely performed.

### Marcello's garret room

Before our extract begins, Musetta, who can no longer bear the sufferings of hunger and want, determines to leave Marcello. She has written him a letter which she has given the porter to deliver to him. During the festivities in the courtyard, Mimi has allowed herself to be carried off by Count Paul, but she returns, motivated by love for Rodolfo, who is in his room. Musetta has begged her to go with her, but she has refused.

Now when Marcello returns angrily with the letter, Mimi hides behind a screen. After Musetta and Marcello have quarrelled, admitted they still love each other, yet Musetta still wants to leave, Mimi emerges, and Marcello furiously calls Rodolfo to come out of his room. Marcello and Rodolfo force both women to leave the apartment. Musetta gathers up her possessions, accidentally dropping a bonnet which Marcello had given her in better times.

## **Strauss - Der Rosenkavalier 1910**

### Act 3 Trio

The Marschallin, Sophie, and Octavian are left alone. The Marschallin recognizes that the day she so feared has come, as Octavian hesitates between the two women. In the emotional climax of the opera, the Marschallin gracefully releases Octavian, encouraging him to follow his heart and love Sophie. She then withdraws elegantly to the next room to talk with Faninal. As soon as she is gone, Sophie and Octavian run to each other's arms.