

Birgit Nilsson
Opera Arias



Mozart · Beethoven · Weber · Wagner · Verdi

Philharmonia Orchestra

Heinz Wallberg · Leopold Ludwig



TESTAMENT

Mozart: Don Giovanni, Act I (*da Ponte*)

Donna Anna

1 Or sai chi l'onore
rapire a me volse,
chi fu il traditore
che il padre mi tolse.
Vendetta ti chieggo,
la chiede il tuo cor.
Rammenta la piaga
del misero seno,
rimira di sangue
coperto il terreno,
se l'ira in te langue
d'un giusto furor.
Or sai chi l'onore, ecc.
Vendetta ti chieggo, ecc.

Beethoven: Fidelio, Act I (*J. & G. Sonnleithner nach Bouilly*)

Leonora

2 Abscheulicher! Wo eilst du hin?
Was hast du vor in wildem Grimme?
Des Mitleids Ruf, der Menschen Stimme,
rührt nichts mehr deinen Tigersinn!
Doch toben auch wie Meereswogen
dir in der Seele Zorn und Wut,
so leuchtet mir ein Farbenbogen,
der hell auf dunkeln Wolken ruht.
Der blickt so still, so friedlich nieder,
der spiegelt alte Zeiten wieder,
und neu besänftigt walt mein Blut.
Komm, Hoffnung, laß den letzten Stern
der Müden nicht erbleichen!
O komm, erhelle mein Ziel, sei's noch so fern,
o komm, die Liebe wird's erreichen.
Ich folg' dem inner'n Triebe,
ich wanke nicht, mich stärkt die Pflicht
der treuen Gattenliebe!
O du, für den ich alles trug,
könnt' ich zur Stelle dringen,
wo Bösheit dich in Fesseln schlug,

Now you know who tried
to steal my honour from me,
who was the betrayer
who took my father's life.
I ask you for vengeance.
Your heart asks for it, too.
Remember the wound
in the poor man's breast.
The ground all around
covered with blood,
if ever in your heart
your anger weakens.
Now you know who tried, etc.
I ask you for vengeance, etc.

Monster! Where are you hurrying?
What do you plan in your wild fury?
The call of pity, the voice of humanity,
does nothing touch your tiger-mind?
Yet though like ocean breakers
hatred and rage storm in your soul,
in me there shines a rainbow,
that brightly rests on dark clouds.
It looks so calm, so peacefully down,
it reflects old times again,
and my blood flows calm anew.
Come, Hope, let the last star
not forsake the weary!
Brighten my goal; be it ever so far.
Love will reach it.
I follow an inner compulsion,
I do not falter, strengthened by the duty
of faithful married love!
O you, for whom I bore everything,
could I but penetrate the place
where evil threw you in chains,

und süßen Trost dir bringen!
Ich folg' dem inner'n Triebe,
ich wanke nicht, mich stärkt die Pflicht
der treuen Gattenliebe!

3

Beethoven: Ah, perfido, Op.65 (*Metastasio*)

Ah, perfido, spergiuoro,
barbaro traditor, tu parti?
E son questi gl'ultimi tuoi congedi?
Ove s'intese tirannia più crudel?
Va, scellerato! Va, pur fuggi da me,
l'ira de' Numi non fuggirai!

Se v'e pietà
congiurerranno a gara tutti a punirti!
Ombra seguace, presente ovunque vai,
vedrò le mie vendette;
io già le godo immaginando;
i fulmini ti veggio già balenar d'intorno
Ah, no! ah, no! Fermate, vindici Dei!

Risparmiate quel cor, ferite il mio!
S'ei non è più qual era,
son io qual fui;
per lui vivea,
voglio morir per lui!
Per pietà, non dirmi addio,
di te priva che farò?
Tu lo sai, bell'idol mio,
io d'affanno morirò.
Per pietà, ecc.
Ah crudel! crudel!
Tu vuoi ch'io mora!
Tu non hai pietà di me?
Perché rendi a chi t'adora
così barbara mercé?
Dite voi, se in tanto affanno
non son degna di pietà?
Ah crudel, tu vuoi ch'io mora! ecc.
Dite voi, se in tanto affanno, ecc

and bring you sweet comfort!
I follow an inner compulsion,
I do not falter, strengthened by the duty
of faithful married love!

Ah, perfidious, false,
brutal traitor, you are leaving me?
And this is your last farewell?
Whoever heard of harsher cruelty?
Go, you wretch! Go, flee from me then,
but you will not escape the fury of the gods!

If there is justice in Heaven, if there is pity,
they will all vie in scheming to punish you!
Like a pursuing shadow, present wherever you go,
I shall see vengeance done:
I enjoy it already in my thoughts;
I can see the thunderbolts already flashing about you
Ah, no! Ah, no! Stop, ye avenging gods!

Spare that heart, strike at mine!
If he is no longer as he was,
I am just as I was;
for him I lived,
and I will die for him!
For pity's sake,
do not bid me farewell,
what shall I do without you?
I shall die of grief.
For pity's sake, etc.
Ah, cruel one, cruel one!
You want me to die!
Have you no pity for me?
Why do you repay the one who adores you
so barbarously?
Say, ye gods, if in such bitter grief
I do not deserve pity?
Ah, cruel one, you want me to die, etc.
Say, ye gods, if in such bitter grief, etc.

Weber: Oberon, Act II (*Planché trans. Hell*)

Rezia

4

Ozean, du Ungeheuer! Schlangengleich
hältst du umschlungen rings die ganze Welt!
Dem Aug' bist ein Anblick voll Größe du,
wenn friedlich in des Morgens Licht du schläfst.
Doch wenn in Wut du dich erhebst, o Meer,
und schlingst den Knoten um dein Opfer hier,
zermalmend das mächtige Schiff, als wär's ein Rohr,
dann, Ozean, stellst du ein Schreckbild vor.

Noch seh' ich die Welle toben,
durch die Nacht ihr Schäumen schleudern,
an der Brandung, wild gehoben,
jede Lebenshoffnung scheitern.

Doch still! Seh' ich nicht Licht dort schimmern,
ruhend auf der fernen Nacht,
wie des Morgens blasses Flimmern,
wenn vom Schlafe er erwacht?

Heller nun empor es glühet,
in dem Sturmesnebelzug.
wie zerriss'ne Wimpel fliehet,
wie wilder Rosse Mähnenflug!
Und nun, die Sonne strahlt! Die Winde lispeln leis',
gestillter Zorn wogt nur im Wellenkreis!

Wolkenlos strahlt nun die Sonne
auf die Purpurwellen nieder,
wie ein Held nach Schlachtenwonne
siegreich kehrt zur Heimat wieder.
Ach! Vielleicht erblicket nimmer
wieder dieses Aug' ihr Licht!
Lebe wohl, du Glanz, für immer,
denn für mich erstehst du nicht.

Doch was glänzt dort schön und weiß,
hebt sich mit der Wellen Heben?
's ist die Möwe, sie schweift im Kreis,
wo die Flut raubte ein Leben.
Nein! Kein Vogel ist's! Es naht!

Ocean! thou mighty monster, that liest curled
Like a green serpent round about the world,
To musing eye thou art an awesome sight,
When calmly sleeping in the morning light.
But when thou risest in thy wrath, as now,
And fling'st thy folds around some fated prow,
Crushing the strong-ribbed bark as 'twere a reed,
Then, Ocean, art thou terrible indeed.

Still I see the billows flashing,
Through the gloom their white foam flinging,
And the breakers' sullen dashing
In mine ear hope's knell is ringing.

But lo! methinks a light is breaking
Slowly o'er the distant deep.
Like a second morn awaking,
Pale and feeble, from it's sleep.

Brighter now behold 'tis beaming
On the storm, whose misty train,
Like some shattered flag, is streaming.
Or a wild steed's flying mane.
And now the sun bursts forth, the wind is lulling fast.
And the broad wave but pants from fury past.

Cloudless o'er the blushing water
Now the setting sun is burning,
Like a victor, red with slaughter,
To his tent in triumph turning.
Ah, perchance these eyes may never
Look upon its light again.
Fare thee well, bright orb, for ever;
Thou for me wilt rise in vain.

But what gleams so white and fair
Heaven with the heaving billow?
'Tis a sea-bird wheeling there
O'er some wretch's watery pillow.
No, it is no bird, I mark.

Heil! Es ist ein Boot, ein Schiff!
Und ruhig segelt's seinen Pfad
ungestört durch das Riff.
O Wonne! Mein Hüon, zum Ufer herbei!
Schnell, schnell, diesen Schleier! Daß er weht!
Sie sehn mich! Schon Antwort! Sie rudern mit Macht!
Hüon! Mein Gatte! Mein Liebster! Rettung, sie naht!

Weber: Der Freischütz, Act II (*Kind*)

Agathe

5

Wie nahte mir der Schlummer,
bevor ich ihn geseh'n?
Ja, Liebe pflegt mit Kummer
stets Hand in Hand zu geh'n!
Ob Mond auf seinem Pfad wohl lacht?
Welch schöne Nacht!
Leise, leise,
fromme Weise!
Schwing dich auf zum Sternenkreise.
Lied, erschalle!
Feiernd walle
mein Gebet zur Himmelshalle!
O wie hell die goldnen Sterne,
mit wie reinem Glanz sie glüh'n!
Nur dort in der Berge Ferne
scheint ein Wetter aufzuzieh'n.
Dort am Wald auch schwebt ein Heer
dunkler Wolken dumpf und schwer.
Zu dir wende
ich die Hände,
Herr ohn' Anfang und ohn' Ende!
Vor Gefahren
uns zu wahren,
sende deine Engelscharen!
Alles pflegt schon längst der Ruh';
Trauter Freund, was weilst du?
Ob mein Ohr auch eifrig lauscht,
nur der Tannen Wipfel rauscht;
nur das Birkenlaub im Hain
flüstert durch die hehre Stille.

Joy! it is a boat! a sail!
And yonder rides a gallant bark,
Uninpaired by the gale!
O transport! My Huon! haste down to the shore –
Quick, quick! for a signal this scarf shall be waved.
They see me! they answer! they ply the strong oar!
Huon! my husband! my love! we are saved!

How did sleep come to me
Before I saw him?
Yes love and anxiousness take care
Always to go hand in hand,
Is the moon too laughing on its course?
What a beautiful night!
Softly, softly,
My pure song!
Waft yourself to the region of stars.
Resound, my song!
Solemnly float
My prayer to the halls of heaven!
O how bright the golden stars are,
With how pure a gleam they glow!
There only, in the distant mountains
A storm seems to be brewing up.
There too in the forest hovers a clump
Of dark clouds, brooding and heavy.
To you I turn
My hands,
Lord without beginning or end!
From dangers
To guard us
Send your hosts of angels!
All things have long betaken themselves to rest.
Dear friend, where are you tarrying?
Even when my ear listens keenly,
Only the tops of the fir trees rustle,
Only the birchleaves in the grove
Whisper through the wondrous silence,

Nur die Nachtigall und Grille
scheint der Nachtluft sich zu freu'n.
Doch wie? Täuscht mich nicht mein Ohr?
Dort klingt's wie Schritte!
Dort aus der Tannen Mitte
kommt was hervor!
Er ist's! Er ist's!
Die Flagge der Liebe mag weh'n!
Dein Mädchen wacht
noch in der Nacht!
Er scheint mich noch nicht zu seh'n!
Gott, täuscht das Licht
des Mond's mich nicht,
so schmückt ein Blumenstrauß den Hut!
Gewiß, er hat den besten Schuß getan!
Das kündigt Glück für morgen an!
O süße Hoffnung, neu belebter Mut!
All meine Pulse schlagen,
und das Herz wallt ungestüm
süß entzückt entgegen ihm!
Konnt' ich das zu hoffen wagen?
Ja, es wandte sich das Glück
zu dem teuren Freund zurück,
Will sich morgen treu bewähren!
Ist's nicht Täuschung? Ist's nicht Wahn?
Himmel, nimm des Dankes Zähren
für dies Pfand der Hoffnung an!
All meine Pulse schlagen,
und das Herz wallt ungestüm
süß entzückt entgegen ihm,
entzückt entgegen ihm!

Wagner: Tristan und Isolde, Act III

Isolde

[6]

Mild und leise wie er lächelt,
wie das Auge hold er öffnet –
seht ihr's, Freunde?
seht ihr's nicht?
Immer lichter wie er leuchtet,
sternumstrahlet hoch sich hebt?

Only the nightingale and cricket
Seem to enjoy the night air.
And yet? Do my ears deceive me?
That sounds like footsteps!
From the middle of the firs there
Someone is coming!
It is he, it is he!
Let love's banner flutter!
Your maiden is watching
Even though it is night!
He does not seem to see me yet!
God, if the moonlight
Does not deceive me,
A bunch of flowers adorns his hat!
For sure he has made the best shot!
That tells of good luck for tomorrow!
O sweet hope, o courage new revived!
All my pulses are beating,
And my heart pants wildly,
Full of sweet enchantment at his approach!
Could I dare to hope it?
Yes, luck has returned
Back to my dear friend,
And will stay faithful tomorrow!
Is it no mistake? Is it no madness?
Heaven, receive these tears of thanks
For this pledge of hope!
All my pulses are beating,
And my heart pants wildly,
Full of sweet enchantment at his approach!
Enchanted at his approach!

How softly and gently he smiles,
how sweetly his eyes open –
can you see, my friends,
do you not see it?
how he glows ever brighter,
raising himself high amidst the stars?

Seht ihr's nicht?

Wie das Herz ihm mutig schwillt,
voll und hehr im Busen ihm quillt?

Wie den Lippen, wonnig mild,
süßer Atem sanft entweht –
Freunde! Seht!

Fühlt und seht ihr's nicht?

Hör' ich nur diese Weise,
die so wundervoll und leise,
Wonne klagend, alles sagend,
mild versöhnend aus ihm tönend,
in mich dringet, auf sich schwinget,
hold erhaltend um mich klinget?

Heller schallend, mich umwallend,

sind es Wellen sanfter Lüfte?

Sind es Wogen wonniger Düfte?

Wie sie schwellen, mich umrauschen,

soll ich atmen, soll ich lauschen?

Soll ich schlürfen, untertauchen?

Süß in Düften mich verhauchen?

In dem wogenden Schwall,

in dem tönenden Schall,

in des Welt-Atems wehendem All –

ertrinken, versinken –

unbewußt – höchste Lust!

Verdi: Un ballo in maschera, Act II (Somma)

Amelia

7 Ecco l'orrido campo ove s'accoppia

Al delitto la morte!

Ecco là le colonne –

La pianta è le, verdeggia al piè,

S'inoltri.

Ah! mi si aggala il core!

Sino il rumor de' passi miei, qui tutto

M'empie di raccapriccio e di terrore!

E se perir dovessi?

Perire! Ebben, quando la sorte mia,

Il mio dover tal è, s'adempia, e sia.

(Fa per avviarsi.)

Do you not see it?

How his heart swells with courage,
gushing full and majestic in his breast?

How in tender bliss sweet breath

gently wafts from his lips –

Friends! Look!

Do you not feel and see it?

Do I alone hear this melody

so wondrously and gently sounding from within him,

in bliss lamenting, all-expressing,

soaring reconciling, piercing me,

soaring aloft, its sweet echoes

resounding about me?

Are they gentle aerial waves

ringing out clearly, surging around me?

Are they billows of blissful fragrance?

As they seethe and roar about me,

shall I breathe, shall I give ear?

Shall I drink of them, plunge beneath them?

Breathe my life away in sweet scents?

In the heaving swell,

in the resounding echoes,

in the universal stream of the world-breath –

to drown, to founder –

unconscious – utmost rapture!

Here is the horrid field where crime
and death are joined together!

There, the columns –

there the plants, green their base.

I shall go on.

Ah, my heart is chilled!

Everything, even the sound of my own step,

fills me with terror!

And if I should die?

To die! If such should be my fate,

my duty, then let it come. So be it.

(She moves on.)

Ma dall'arido stelo divulsa
Come avrò di mia mano quell'erba,
E che dentro la mente convulsa
Quell'eterea sambianza morrà,
Che ti resta, perduto l'amor –
Che ti resta, mio povero cor!
Oh! chi piange, qual forza m'arretra,
M'attraversa la squallida via?
Su, coraggio – e tu fatti di pietra,
Non tradirmi, dal pianto ristà:
O finisci di battere e muor,
T'annienta, mio povero cor!
(Suona mezzanotte.)
Mezzanotte! – Ah! che veggio?
Una testa di sotterra si leva – e sospira!
Ha negli occhi il baleno dell'ira
E m'affissa e terribile sta!
(Cade in ginocchio.)
Deh! mi reggi, m'aita, o Signor,
Miserere d'un povero cor!

Verdi: La forza del destino, Act IV *(Piave)*
Leonora

8

Pace, pace, mio Dio! Pace, mio Dio!
Cruda sventura
m'astringe, ahimè, a languir;
come il di primo da tant'anni dura
profondo il mio soffrir.
Pace, pace, mio Dio! ecc.
L'amai, gli è ver! Ma di beltà e valore
cotanto Iddio l'ornò,
che l'amo ancor, nè togliermi dal core
l'immagin sua saprò.
Fatalità! Fatalità!
Un delitto disgiunti n'ha quaggiù!
Alvaro, io t'amo, e su nel cielo è scritto:
non ti vedrò mai più!
Oh, Dio, Dio, fa ch'io muoia;
ché la calma può darmi morte sol.
Invan la pace qui sperò quest'alma, ecc.

When I have plucked the herb,
with my own hand, from its arid stem,
when from my troubled mind
that dear image will have been effaced,
what is left, once love is dead?
Oh! Who is weeping, what power,
what power holds me back,
barring my way on this fearful road?
courage now – o poor heart, be of stone,
do not betray me, nor yield to tears,
o cease to beat, and die,
crumble to nothingness!
(A bell strikes midnight.)
Midnight! Ah, what do I see?
A head rises up from beneath the earth – and sigh!
In its eyes, anger flashes,
and it stares at me – silent, terrible.
(She falls to her knees.)
Ah, help me, give me strength, o Lord,
mercy on a suffering heart!

Peace, peace, o my God!
Cruel misfortune
compels me, alas, to languish;
for so many years have I suffered,
as bitterly as at first.
Peace, peace, o my God! etc.
I loved him, its true! But God had
blessed him with such beauty and virtue
that I love him still, and never shall I be able
to efface his image from my heart.
Ah, destiny! destiny!
A crime divided us here below!
Alvaro, I love you, and in heaven it is written
that I shall never see you again!
Oh God, God, let me die:
for only in death shall I know peace.
My soul sought peace in vain in this world, etc.

(Si dirige ad una pietra su cui il Padre Guardiano le ha lasciato qualcosa da mangiare.)

in preda a tanto, a tanto duol,
in mezzo a tanto, a tanto duol.
Invan la pace quest'alma, ecc.
Misero pane, a prolungarmi vien
la sconsolata vita...Ma chi giunge?
Chi profanare ardisce il sacro loco?
Maledizione, maledizione, maledizione!
(Torna rapidamente alla grotta, e vi si rinchiude.
Si ode dentro la scena un cossar di spade.)

Verdi: Aida, Act I *(Ghislanzoni)*

Aida

9

Ritorna vincitore! E dal mio labbro
Usci l'empia parola! Vincitor
Del padre mio di lui che impugna l'armi
Per me per ridarmi
Una patria, una reggia e il nome illustre
Che qui celar m'è forza. Vincitor
De' miei fratelli...ond'io lo vegga, tinto
Del sangue amato, trionfar nel plauso
Dell'egizie coorti! E dietro il carro,
Un Re, mio padre, di catene avvinto!

L'insana parola,
O numi, sperdete!
Al seno d'un padre
La figlia rendete;
Struggete le squadre
Dei nostri oppressor!
Ah! Sventurata! che dissi? E l'amor mio?

Dunque scordar poss'io
Questo fervido amore che oppressa e schiava
Come raio di sol qui mi beava?
Imprecharò la morte
A Radamès, a lui ch'amo pur tanto!
Ah! non fu in terra mai
Da più crudeli angosce un core affranto!

I sacri nomi di padre, d'amante

She goes to a rock on which the Father Superior has left food for her.)

my soul, the prey of
eternal sorrow.
My soul sought peace in vain, etc.
O wretched bread, which lengthens out
this sorry life, But who comes now,
daring to profane this sacred refuge?
A curse upon him! A curse upon him!
(She retreats rapidly into the cave, closing the door behind her. Suddenly, from off stage, the sound of swords.)

Return victorious! My lips have spoken
the traitorous words! Victorious
over my father, who takes up arms
for me, to give me again
a country, a kingdom and a great name,
which here I must hide. Victorious
over my brothers – that I may see him, stained
with the beloved blood, welcomed
in triumph by Egypt! And behind his chariot,
a King, my father, in chains!

My mad word,
O gods, efface!
Send back this child
to her father's heart.
Destroy the legions
of our oppressors!
Wretched girl, what have I said? And my love?

Can I, then, forget
this burning love, which, as a wretched slave,
I welcomed in rapture like a ray of the sun?
Shall I invoke death
upon Radamès, him whom I love so much?
Ah, never on earth
has a broken heart known such anguish!

The sacred words father and lover –

Nè profferir poss'io, ne ricordar;
Per l'un, per l'altro confusa e tremante.
Io piangere vorrei, vorrei pregar.
Ma la mia prece in bestemmia si muta...
Delitto è il pianto a me, colpa il sospir...
Io notte cupa la mente è perduta,
E nell'ansia crudel vorrei morir.
Numi, pietà del mio soffrir!
Speme non v'ha pel mio dolor.
Amor fatal, tremendo amor,
Spezzami il cor, fammi morir!
Numi, pietà del mio soffrir! ecc.

Verdi: Aida, Act III (*Ghislanzoni*)

Aida

10

Qui Radamès verrà! Che vorrà dirmi?
Io tremo. Ah! se tu vieni
A racarmi, o crudel, l'ultimo addio,
Del Nilo i cupi vortici
Mi daran tomba, e pace forse, e oblio.
O patria mia, mai più ti rivedrò!
O cieli azzurri, o dolci aure native,
Dove sereno il mio mattin brillò,
O verdi colli, o profumate rive,
O patria mia, mai più ti rivedrò! ecc.
O fresche valli, o queto asil beato,
Che un dì promesso dall'amor mi fu;
Or che d'amore il sogno è dileguato,
O patria mia, non ti vedrò mai più! ecc.
(*Volgendosi, vede il padre.*)
Ciel! mio padre!

I can no longer speak them, nor remember.
For each, in my fear and confusion,
I should like to pray, to weep.
But my prayer changes to cursing –
tears, for me, are criminal; so too my sighs.
My mind is lost in a bitter night,
and in such cruel anguish I wish to die.
Oh! gods, have pity on my suffering!
There is no hope for my sorrow!
Fatal love, fearful love,
break my heart and let me die!
Oh! gods, have pity on my suffering! etc.

Radamès will come here. What will he say?
I tremble. Ah! if you come, cruel man,
to bid me a last farewell,
in the dark eddies of the Nile I shall find
my tomb, perhaps peace – but at least, oblivion!
O fatherland, I shall never see you again!
O blue skies, soft breezes of my homeland,
where I lived out the quiet morning of my life,
O grassy hills, O fragrant streams,
O fatherland, I shall never see you again! etc.
O cool valleys, blessed, peaceful haven,
one day promised me by love,
now that the dream of love is gone,
O fatherland, I shall never see you again! etc.
(*Amonasro enters.*)
Heaven! My father!