

OPERAS FOR JULY 2024

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Stories of the Operas

La forza del destino The Power of Fate, often translated (The Force of Destiny) is an Italian opera by Giuseppe Verdi. The libretto was written by Francesco Maria Piave based on a Spanish drama, Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino (1835), by Ángel de Saavedra, 3rd Duke of Rivas, with a scene adapted from Friedrich Schiller's Wallensteins Lager). It was first performed in the Bolshoi Kamenny Theatre of Saint Petersburg, Russia, on 10 November 1862

Roles

The Marquis of Calatrava	bass	Paolo Washington
Leonora, his daughter	soprano	Zinka Milanov
Don Carlo di Vargas, his son	baritone	Leonard Warren
Don Alvaro, Leonora's suitor	tenor	Giuseppe Di Stefano
Curra, Leonora's maid	mezzo-soprano	Luisa Gioia
Preziosilla, a young gypsy	mezzo-soprano	Rosalind Elias
Mayor	bass	Virgilio Carbonari
Maestro Trabuco, a muleteer	tenor	Angelo Mercuriaki
Il Padre Guardiano	bass	Giorgio Tozzi
Fra Melitone, a Franciscan	baritone	Dino Mantovani
A surgeon	bass	Sergio Liviabella

Chorus & Orchestra dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Roma / Fernando Previtali

Synopsis

Place: Spain and Italy

Time: around 1750

Overture

The music begins with the opera's "Fate" motif, an ominous three E's unison in the brass.

Act 1: The mansion of Leonora's family, in Seville

Don Alvaro, a young nobleman from South America (presumably Peru), has settled in Seville, Spain, where he is looked down on by many because of his Inca background. There, he and Donna Leonora, the daughter of the haughty Marquis of Calatrava, have fallen in love. But her father the Marquis violently opposes a match he feels is dishonorable and beneath her, believing her to have been seduced. Notwithstanding her tender regard for her father, who until now has always been kind to her, Leonora is ready to give up family and country in order to elope with Alvaro. Aided by her confidante, Curra. (Me pellegrina ed orfana – "Exiled and orphaned far from my childhood home"), she prepares to leave.

When Alvaro arrives to fetch her, however, Leonora, hesitates, begging for one last day with her father. Alvaro, stunned, releases her from their engagement, saying that she cannot love him as much as he loves her. Leonora then relents and they agree to escape as planned. At that moment the Marquis suddenly enters and discovers the couple together. Assuming the worst, he draws his weapons and threatens the young man with death. To remove any suspicion as to Leonora's purity, Alvaro surrenders himself. As he flings down his pistol, it goes off, mortally wounding the Marquis, who dies, uttering a curse on his daughter. The horrified lovers rush out of the room.

Act 2: Scene 1: An inn in the village of Hornachuelos

About a year has passed since the death of the Marquis of Calatrava. In their flight, Leonora and Alvaro were separated and have lost track of each other, unable to reunite or learn of each other's whereabouts.

The act opens in the crowded dining room of an inn, where the guests include the Alcalde (Town Mayor) and several muleteers among others gathered in the dining room as dinner is about to be served. Leonora's brother Don Carlo de Vargas then enters, bent on avenging the family honour and the death of his father. Carlo has disguised himself as a student from Salamanca by the name of Pereda. (Son Pereda son ricco d'onore – "I am Pereda, of honourable descent"). During the supper, Preziosilla, a pretty gypsy fortune teller joins them and sings a song urging them to enlist in the army (Al suon del tamburo – "When side drums rattle") for Italy's freedom. Leonora arrives in male attire accompanied by Trabuco, a muleteer, on their way to a Franciscan monastery where Leonora plans to seek refuge. Recognizing her brother, whom she knows wants to kill her, she hides. Carlo/"Pereda" grills Trabuco about the identity of his traveling companion, but the company lets him know they don't like his prying questions. They turn the tables by asking Carlo who he is. He claims to be a University student helping a friend track down the friend's sister and her seducer, who, he claims has returned to his native America. The gypsy girl laughs and says she doesn't believe this story. Overhearing this, Leonora realizes that Alvaro is still alive. She concludes he has betrayed and abandoned her, and she slips away without being discovered.

Scene 2: A monastery nearby

Outside the monastery of the Madonna of Angels, Leonora, seeking sanctuary and solitary atonement, has come to take refuge in the monastery intending to live the rest of her life as a hermit (Son giunta! Grazie, o Dio! Estremo asil quest'è per me! ... Madre, pietosa Vergine, – "I've arrived! Thank heaven! My last resort and hope"... "Mother, merciful Virgin".) After a somewhat surly reception by Fra Melitone, she tells the abbot, Padre Guardiano, her true name and her wish to spend the remainder of her life in the monastery's hermitage. The abbot recounts the trials she will have to undergo. Padre Guardiano agrees to direct her to a secret cave in the mountains, where he alone will bring her food and where she will find a bell which she is to ring only in times of great danger or if she is on the point of death. Leonora, Padre Guardiano, Fra Melitone, and the other monks join in prayer as she is formally accepted as tenant of the hermitage.

Act 3: Scene 1: A forest near Velletri, in Italy

Meanwhile, Alvaro, believing Leonora to be dead, has joined the Spanish army under the name of Don Federico Herreros and has distinguished himself for bravery (La vita è inferno all'infelice ... O tu che in seno agli angeli – "Life is a hell to an unhappy man." ... "Oh, you

who dwell with the angels"). He is interrupted by cries for help and rescues a man from two assassins. It is Don Carlo, who has newly joined the same regiment, also under an assumed name: Don Felix Bornos. The two become friends and march off side by side to fight in the Battle of Velletri, a historical event which occurred in 1744.

Scene 2: The officers' quarters

Alvaro is brought into the officers' quarters, gravely wounded in the chest. Thinking he is about to die, he entrusts the key to a casket to his friend "Don Felix" (Carlo). The box contains packet of letters, which Alvaro says contain a secret. He makes his friend swear to burn them without reading them: (Solenne in quest'ora, giurarmi dovete far pago un mio voto – "You must swear to me in this solemn hour, to carry out my wish."). Felix/Carlo assures Alvaro that he won't die and that he will be decorated with the Order of Calatrava for his bravery. At the name Calatrava Alvaro shudders and exclaims, "No!". Carlo is taken aback. He is afraid that "Don Federico" (Alvaro) may in truth be the mysterious seducer who killed his father. He resolves to look at the letters to settle his doubts. (Morir! Tremenda cosa! ... Urna fatale del mio destino – "To die! An immense thing... Begone, fatal vessel of my destiny!"). As his wounded friend is taken away on the surgeon's stretcher, he opens the casket, finds his sister's portrait, and realizes Alvaro's true identity. At that moment a surgeon brings word that Don Alvaro may recover. Don Carlo exults at the prospect of avenging his father's death.

Scene 3: A camp near the battleground

Having recovered, Alvaro is confronted by Carlo. They begin to duel, but are pulled away from each other by the soldiers. As they restrain Carlo, the anguished Don Alvaro vows to enter a monastery.

The soldiers gather. Trabucco, the peddler, tries to sell them his wares; Fra Melitone chastises them for their godless ways; and Preziosilla leads them in a chorus in praise of the military life (Rataplan, rataplan, della gloria – "Rum-tum-tum on the drum is the music that makes a soldier's martial spirit rise").

Act 4: Scene 1: The monastery

Impoverished peasants from the region approach Fra Melitone at the monastery at Hornachuelos for food and Padre Guardiano gently scolds Melitone for his less than charitable behaviour towards them. Don Carlo then approaches, having learned of the presence of Don Alvaro there. Under the name of Father Raphael, Alvaro has indeed entered the monastery, near which is Leonora's cave. Alvaro offers peace, but when Carlo taunts him as a half-breed Alvaro takes up the challenge and the two rush from the monastery. (Le minacce, i fieri accenti – "May the winds carry off with them").

Scene 2: A desolate spot near Leonora's hermitage

Leonora, longing for the peaceful release of death, restates her love for Alvaro and begs God for peace. (Pace, pace mio Dio! – "Peace, O mighty Father, give me peace!"). The duel between the two men spills over onto the neighbouring crags in the vicinity of Leonora's isolation. Upon hearing the clashing of swords she takes refuge in her cave. Carlos is mortally wounded by Alvaro, who invades the hermit's sanctuary to request the last offices for the dying man. Leonora and Alvaro recognize each other. Alvaro tells her of what has happened, and she rushes to embrace her dying brother. As she bends over him, he stabs her in the heart. The Father Superior, who has come in answer to Leonora's alarm bell, orders

Alvaro to stop cursing fate and to humble himself before God. The dying Leonora joins him in this plea, and Alvaro declaims that he is now redeemed.

SAREMA **Alexander von Zemlinsky**

Sarema has its origins in a competition in 1893 for a new German opera to commemorate the birthday of the Prince-Regent Luitpold of Bavaria. The winner of the competition was to be announced in 1895 on the Prince's birthday. However, there were 103 entries and the winner was not announced until 1896. Zemlinsky's opera was of course, "Sarema", and it came second. The winner was an opera called "Theurdank" by the totally forgotten Ludwig Thuille. "Sarema" was performed in 1897 at the royal Court Theatre in Munich and again in Munich and Leipzig in 1899. And then it sunk into oblivion until 1996.

The libretto was adapted by Zemlinsky himself from an 1870 play of the same name by Rudolf von Gottschall. The story is set in the Caucasus; in particular, in the mountainous areas of Abkhazia and Lezgian. This was the home of the fierce and proud tribe known as "The Circassians". For 30 years, from 1815 until 1845, Russia battled against these tribes while trying to conquer them and bring them into the empire of the Tsar of Russia. It was in this period that the opera is set and the incidents are based around a battle for the remote fortress of Dargo or Dagestan in 1859. When Zemlinsky set this play, it would have had a topicality to his audience similar to, for us, an opera set in the 1939 - 1945 war.

Cast

Sarema (A Caucasian Princess)	Karen Clarke
Prince Tscharikoff (A Russian Colonel)	Laslo Lukas
Asslan (In love with Sarema)	Norbert Kleinhenn
Amul Beg (Sarema's father)	Andreas Scheel
The Prophet	Juri Zinovenko
Godunoff (a captain)	Nick Herbosch
A herald	Florian Simson

Chorus & additional choir of Trier opera

City Orchestra of Trier: Conductor: István Dénes

Synopsis

"A woman of the enemies flees her people, draw curses for her love of you." Godunov

Act1: Dargo has been conquered by the Russians, and Prince Tcherikov, the Russian commander, and his captain Godunov are playing a game of dice to pass the time. Their stake is Sarema. Tcherikov, however, is upset, since he personally defended the exotic beauty against the Cossacks, his allies [Tcherikov *"Als Dargo wir in Sturm genommen, da sah ich sie aufFelsen klettem, verfolgt von einem Schwarm Kosaken ..."*]. Sarema, who has fallen in love with her rescuer, has decided to remain with him in the enemy camp [Sarema *"Lass mich dich anschaun trun-kenen Blickes, das he fit die kranke Seele"*]. She is plagued by her conscience, however, since she has betrayed her people through her love for Tcherikov and has become an object of hatred for them [Sarema *"Ich bin die Fremde, die Ver-fluchte, die ihrer Briider Feindgefolgt!"*]. When Tcherikov is called back to the Czar's service, Sarema must decide between following her love [Sarema *"Deine Liebe ist das grosse Meer"*] or returning to her own people [Sarema *"Hiersteh ich wie die Antilope am Felshang, mein Vater-land, von dir soll ich scheiden..."*]. Asslan then arrives [Asslan *"Jetzt aber schlürft*

mein trunkenes Auge der Schb'nheit Pracht die mich um-gibt"]. Still in love with Sarema, he has crept into the Russian camp to save his beloved, since he knows that the Circassians are about to attack the Russians. Sarema confesses that she loves her enemy and begs that Tcherikov's life be spared [Sarema "*Weisst du, wer ich bin ...*"]. Tcherikov suddenly enters and, finding Asslan there, has him put in chains. Now, however, the situation changes and Sarema fights for Asslan's life. She manages to procure a stay of execution in spite of Tcherikov's fury. And as the Russians gather together, Sarema curses the day that she gave herself to the enemy of her people [Sarema "*Wie ich liebte, hasse ich*"]. She wants to atone for her crime and return to her people. [Sarema "*Oh, steht mir bei zur Suhnetat, dass Hass vor Liebe nicht besteht*"].

Act 2: The Prophet is praying with the Circassians in the mountains of the Caucasus for the end of their intolerable oppression [The Prophet "*Dass der Freiheit Morgenrot unserm Volke lacht*"]. Revolt is in the air, however, when Sarema intervenes as the elders discuss the battle plan. She is greeted with scorn and indignation, since she has committed an irrevocable act of treason by entering into relations with the enemy. Even when she calls for the immediate rescue of Asslan, her crime only seems to grow larger and larger. Amul Beg, her father, has been blinded by the enemy. He warns the others about his daughter's words [Amul Beg "*Die Kugel, die das Licht mir raubte, sie ludvielleichtmein eigenes Kind...*"]. Sarema is horrified by the evil she has brought upon her people. Only the Prophet recognizes Sarema's ardent desire to redeem her crime [The Prophet "*Ich schau dein Herz, du suchst nach Sühne ...*"]. Brandishing the flag of an army commander in one hand and her father's hallowed sword in the other, she sets out to avenge her brothers - and liberate herself from her curse.

Act3: In the Russian camp, Tcherikov tries to coerce Asslan by promising him his freedom if he reveals when and how forceful the attack will be. He also tries to win him over by suggesting that Sarema was unfaithful. Soon, however, the Russians are being overrun by hordes of Circassians. [Asslan "*Wach ich? Oder ist's ein Traum? Naher kommt's, Gesänge hör ich, Freiheitsliedet*"]. Now it is Tcherikov who becomes the prisoner but Sarema cannot bring herself to conclude her people's last victory in a spirit of triumph (Sarema "*Im Innersten erbebt mem Herz, ich geschmachtet dir zu Fussen*"). She loved a man who "never shed a tear for her. She committed a crime against her fatherland, for she was drunk with happiness and was welcomed by paradise" - a fool's paradise, as it turns out. Sarema then kills herself.

Béatrice et Bénédict [Beatrice and Benedict]

Berlioz

Béatrice et Bénédict is an opera in two acts by Hector Berlioz. Berlioz wrote the French libretto himself, including a substantial spoken narration, based on Shakespeare's comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*

He composed the score of Béatrice et Bénédict following the completion of *Les Troyens* in 1858. It was first performed at the Theater der Stadt, Baden-Baden on 9 August 1862

The first performances of the opera in France took place at the Opéra-Comique in 1890. It was again produced at that theatre in 2010. Although rather infrequently performed and not part of the standard operatic repertoire, other recent productions have included Amsterdam and Welsh National Opera tour in 2001, Santa Fe Opera in 2004, Strasbourg in 2005, Lyric Opera of Chicago in 2007, Houston Grand Opera in 2008, and Opera Boston in 2011.

Time: The 16th century. Place: Messina, Sicily.

Cast

Beatrice (niece of Leonato)	Yvonne Minton
Benedict (Sicilian officer)	Placido Domingo
Héro (Leonato's daughter)	Ileana Cotrubas
Ursula (Héro's maid)	Nadine Denize
Don Pedro (General, Sicilian Army)	John Macurdy
Claudio (Aide-de-Camp to the General)	Roger Soyer
Somarone (Master of Music)	Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau
With the Chorus & Orchestra of Paris conducted by Daniel Barenboim	
Narrator – Genevieve Page	

Act 1: Don Pedro, prince of Aragon, is visiting Messina after a successful military victory over the Moors, which is celebrated by all of Sicily. He is joined by two friends and fellow soldiers, Claudio and Bénédicte. They are greeted by Léonato, governor of Messina, together with his daughter, Héro, and niece, Béatrice.

Héro awaits the return of her fiancé, Claudio. Béatrice inquires about and scorns Bénédicte. They trade insults and tease each other. Bénédicte swears to his friends that he will never marry. Later, Claudio and Pedro scheme to trick Bénédicte into marrying Béatrice. Knowing that he is listening, Léonato assures Pedro that Béatrice loves Bénédicte. Upon hearing this, Bénédicte resolves that Béatrice's love must not go unrequited, and so he decides to pursue her. Meanwhile, elsewhere, Héro and her attendant, Ursula, manage to play a similar trick on Béatrice who now believes that Bénédicte is secretly in love with her.

Act 2: To celebrate the pending wedding of Claudio and Héro, Léonato hosts a masquerade party. A local music teacher, Somarone, leads the group in song and everybody enjoys themselves except Béatrice who realizes that she has fallen in love with Bénédicte. As she turns to leave she is met by Bénédicte, prompting an exchange in which they both attempt to conceal their love for each other. A notary solemnizes the marriage and, as arranged by Léonato, asks a second couple to come forward. Bénédicte summons the courage to declare his love to Béatrice and the two sign the wedding contract along with Héro and Claudio.

Médée is a French language opéra-comique by Luigi Cherubini. The libretto by François-Benoît Hoffman (Nicolas Étienne Framéry) was based on Euripides' tragedy of Medea and Pierre Corneille's play Médée. It is set in the ancient city of Corinth.

The opera was premiered on 13 March 1797 at the Théâtre Feydeau, Paris. It met with a lukewarm reception and was not immediately revived. During the twentieth century, it was usually performed in an Italian translation by Carlo Zangarini as **Medea**, with the spoken dialogue replaced by recitatives not authorized by the composer. It is this version we feature in this broadcast.

There is a considerable discussion of the opera here:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9d%C3%A9e_\(Cherubini\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9d%C3%A9e_(Cherubini))

Roles

Medea	soprano	Maria Callas
Glauce, Creonte's daughter	soprano	Renata Scotto
Neris, Medea's slave	soprano	Miriam Pirazzini
Giasone	tenor	Mirto Picchi
King Creonte	bass	Giuseppe Modesti
Captain of the Guard	speaking role	Alfredo Giacomotti
Two handmaidens of Dirce	sopranos	Lidia Marimpietri / Elvira Galassi
Chorus & Orchestra of La Scala, Milan / Tullio Serafin		

Synopsis Place: Corinth Time: Antiquity

Act 1: Outside the palace of King Créon

Dircé is preparing for her wedding to Jason. Years ago, Jason had stolen the golden fleece with the help of Médée, who had betrayed her family and established a relationship with Jason, the result of which was two children. Although Jason has since abandoned Médée, she reappears and demands that he return to her. Jason refuses and Médée curses him, swearing vengeance.

Act 2: Inside the palace

In despair, Médée is encouraged by her slave, Nérís, to leave the city. Créon then appears and orders that Médée leave. She asks for one more day with her children and, after the king agrees, she appears to be calmer and gives Nérís two wedding presents to take to her rival.

Act 3: Between the palace and the temple

Nérís brings the two children out to where Médée is waiting. Sounds of lamentation are heard from within the palace and it is discovered that one of Médée's wedding presents has poisoned Dircé. An angry crowd gathers and Nérís, Médée, and the children take refuge in the temple. From the temple, the two women reappear with Médée grasping a blood-stained knife with which she has killed her two children. Médée curses Jason and disappears into the air. The temple goes up in flames and the crowd flees in terror.

Dalibor is a Czech opera in three acts by Bedřich Smetana. The libretto was written in German by Josef Wenzig, and translated into Czech by Ervin Špindler. It was first performed at the New Town Theatre in Prague on 16 May 1868. The opera received criticism at the time for being overly influenced by German opera, including that of Wagner's *Lohengrin*.

The subject of the opera is Dalibor of Kozojedy (c. 1490), a Czech knight who took part in an uprising in Ploskovice in support of the oppressed people and was sentenced to death in 1498, during the reign of Vladislaus II of Hungary. The plot bears a resemblance to that of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, in that the central female characters in each opera disguise themselves in male clothing and gain the confidence of a jailor to try to save the imprisoned hero.

Performance history

Smetana had great affection for the opera, but because of the lukewarm reception, died thinking that he had failed with this opera. The revival in 1886, however, two years after the composer's death, was a success. In the 1890s, the opera received productions in Zagreb, Munich, and Hamburg. Gustav Mahler conducted an 1892 production in Vienna.

Cast

Vladislav, Czech King	baritone	Valeri Alexejev
Dalibor, a knight	tenor	Valerij Popov
Budivoj, Commander of the castle guard	baritone	Damir Basyrov
Beneš, the jailor	bass	Jiri Kalendovsky
Vítek, one of Dalibor's mercenaries	tenor	Valentin Prolat
Milada, sister of the burgrave of Ploškovice	soprano	Eva Urbanoiva
Jitka, a village maiden on Dalibor's estate	soprano	Dagmar Schellenberger
First judge	bass	Carmine Monaco
Orchestra & Chorus of Lyric Theatre Cagliari: Conductor: Yoram David		

Synopsis

Time: 15th century Place: Prague

Act 1: Dalibor, a Czech Knight is on trial before the king for having murdered the burgrave of Ploskovice in revenge for execution of his friend, the musician Zdeněk. At the trial, the king calls upon the burgrave's sister, Milada, who demands his execution. As Dalibor is brought in, the crowd rises in support of him. When Dalibor tells of his friend's capture and murder the court reduces his sentence from death to lifetime imprisonment. Milada painfully realized that she is falling in love with Dalibor, and in collusion with Jitka, an orphan befriended by the knight, she resolves to set him free.

Act 2: After a scene in a mercenary camp, where Jitka and her lover Vítek plot to free Dalibor, Milada enters the prison disguised as a boy and finds employment with Dalibor's jailer, Beneš. She charms the jailer into allowing her into dungeon where Dalibor is being held, to give him his friend's violin. The knight is dreaming, and initially thinks Milada is a reincarnation of his beloved Zdeněk. Then in a passionate duet, they sing of their joy in having found each other.

Act 3: In the dungeon, Dalibor looks forward to escape (singing his famous Song to Freedom) but feeling it is a bad omen when one of the strings of Zdeněk's violin breaks. The plot to bribe Beneš fails, and the jailer informs the king of their attempted escape. Taking the advice of his council, the king orders Dalibor's death. Milada, waiting outside the prison, hears the tolling of the bell that signals Dalibor's execution. Accompanied by her followers, she storms the castle, where, after rescuing Dalibor, she is wounded and dies in his arms. Dalibor stabs himself and is united in death with his beloved.

[An alternative ending has Dalibor executed before Milada can rescue him.]