

## OPERAS FOR SEPTEMBER 2023

|                    |         |                                   |
|--------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>September 6</b> | Rossini | Il Viaggio a Reims                |
| 13                 | Cilea   | Adriana Lecouvreur                |
| 20                 | Gounod: | Faust                             |
| 27                 | Verdi   | Don Carlos [5 act French version] |

### Stories of the operas

#### **Il Viaggio a Reims**

Il viaggio a Reims, ossia L'albergo del giglio d'oro (The Journey to Reims, or The Hotel of the Golden Fleur-de-lis) is an operatic dramma giocoso, originally performed in three acts, by Gioachino Rossini to an Italian libretto by Luigi Balocchi, based in part on *Corinne, ou L'Italie* by Mme de Staël.

Rossini's last opera in the Italian language (all of his later works were in French) premiered under the title *Le voyage à Reims, ou l'Hôtel du Lys-d'Or*. It was commissioned to celebrate the coronation of French King Charles X in Reims in 1825 and has been acclaimed as one of Rossini's finest compositions. A demanding work, it requires 14 soloists (three sopranos, one contralto, two tenors, four baritones, and four basses). At its premiere, it was sung by the greatest voices of the day.

Since the opera was written for a specific occasion, with a plot about European aristocrats, officers - and one poetess - en route to join in the French coronation festivities that the opera itself was composed for, Rossini never intended it to have a life beyond a few performances in Paris. He later re-used about half of the music in *Le comte Ory*.

Il viaggio a Reims does not have an overture. Its so-called overture, derived from a set of dances in *Le siège de Corinthe* (1826), one of which Rossini had reworked from the dances in the finale to *Il viaggio a Reims*, is a twentieth-century invention or an erroneous attribution. It was published in Milan, in 1938, in a revision by Giuseppe Piccioli, which was first performed in the Teatro alla Scala, on 5 November 1938, conducted by Richard Strauss. It was later also recorded repeatedly as the alleged overture of *Il viaggio a Reims*, until it was finally possible to reconstruct the original score of the opera. The attributed overture remains one of Rossini's most recorded works, infusing a grand and elegant style with heavy orchestral power.

#### **Performance history**

Il viaggio a Reims was first performed at the Théâtre Italien, Paris, on 19 June 1825, with Giuditta Pasta as Corinna. There were only four original performances. The different parts of the manuscript, assumed lost, were re-found and re-assembled in the 1970s by the musicologist Janet Johnson, with the help of Philip Gossett.

The first performance after the reconstruction was given at the Rossini Opera Festival on 18 August 1984. It was conducted by Claudio Abbado and directed by Luca Ronconi. The cast included Francisco Araiza, Lella Cuberli, Enzo Dara, Cecilia Gasdia, Eduardo Gimenez, William Matteuzzi, Leo Nucci, Ruggero Raimondi, Samuel Ramey, Katia Ricciarelli, and Lucia Valentini Terrani.

A recording of this performance will be broadcast.

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### Cast

|                                                                                              |                           |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Madame Cortese, Tyrolean hostess of the spa hotel                                            | Katia Ricciarelli         | soprano  |
| Contessa di Folleville, a fashionable young widow                                            | Lella Cuberli             | soprano  |
| Corinna, a famous Roman poetess                                                              | Cecilia Gasdia            | soprano  |
| Marchesa Melibea, the Polish widow of an Italian general killed on their wedding night       | Lucia Valentini-Terrani,  | mezzo    |
| Chevalier Belfiore, handsome young French officer and spare-time painter                     | Edoardo Gimenez           | tenor    |
| Conte di Libenskof, Russian general in love with Marchesa Melibea                            | Francisco Araiza          | tenor    |
| Lord Sidney, English colonel secretly in love with Corinna                                   | Samuel Ramey              | bass     |
| Don Alvaro, Spanish admiral in love with Marchesa Melibea                                    | Leo Nucci                 | bass     |
| Barone di Trombonok, German major and music lover                                            | Enzo Dara                 | bass     |
| Don Profondo, scholar and lover of antiquities, friend of Corinna                            | Ruggero Raimondi          | bass     |
| Don Prudenzio, doctor at the spa                                                             | Giorgio Surjan            | bass     |
| Modestina, the Contessa di Folleville's chamber maid                                         | Bernadette Manca di Nassa | mezzo    |
| Don Luigino, cousin of the Contessa di Folleville                                            | Oslavio di Credico        | tenor    |
| Maddalena, hotel housekeeper from Normandy                                                   | Raquel Pierotti           | mezzo    |
| Antonio, maître d'hotel                                                                      | Luigi de Corato           | baritone |
| Zefirino, courier                                                                            | Ernesto Gavazzi           | tenor    |
| Gelsomino, valet                                                                             | William Matteuzzi         | tenor    |
| Delia, young Greek girl who is Corinna's travelling companion                                | Antonella Bandelli        | soprano  |
| Strolling players, chorus of countrymen and women, gardeners, hotel staff, dancers, servants |                           |          |
| Prague Philharmonic Chorus: Chamber Orchestra of Europe                                      |                           |          |
| Conductor                                                                                    | Claudio Abbado            |          |

### Synopsis

Place: The Golden Lily spa hotel at Plombières-les-Bains in France

Time: 1825

**Act 1: Scene 1:** Introduction: The housekeeper Maddalena is unhappy with the preparations made by the servants for the arrival of the important people who are travelling to Reims for the coronation of Charles X of France. ("Presto, presto ... su, corraggio") The servants repudiate her assertions. The hotel's doctor, Don Prudenzio, announces that, because of the impending arrivals, the normal business of the spa will be suspended. The spa attendants rejoice and depart. He checks with Antonio that his instructions about the necessary meals for the visitors have been followed.

Madame Cortese, the proprietress of the hotel, appears. She regrets that she will be unable to attend the coronation ("Di vaghi raggi adorno"), but is keen to show off the hotel to the visitors in the hope that they will return some day to take the waters. She particularly requests that everyone should be enthusiastic about each of the travellers' specific interests. Everyone agrees, and she is left alone.

**Scene 2:** The Countess of Folleville's arrival: The Countess calls for her maid, Modestina, and Madame Cortese goes to search for her. Modestina appears, and the Countess, worried that her

clothes have not yet arrived, asks why there has been no reply to a letter that she had sent. Modestina had entrusted the letter to the Countess's cousin, Don Luigino, who immediately arrives to say that the stagecoach which he had hired to carry the boxes had overturned on the way. The Countess faints and Don Luigino calls for help.

Maddalena, Antonio, Don Prudenzio and the servants arrive, together with Baron Trombonok. Don Prudenzio and the Baron argue about how to resuscitate the Countess, but she recovers sufficiently to lament the loss of her garments. ("Partir, o ciel! desio") However, when Modestina appears with a large box containing a beautiful Paris bonnet, she rejoices that it, at least, has been saved from the accident. ("Che miro! Ah! Quel sorpresa!") Everyone is amused by this sudden turn of events, and all except Antonio and the Baron depart.

Scene 3: Sextet: After agreeing with the Baron the arrangements for party's departure in the evening, Antonio leaves. The Baron cannot help laughing at the Countess's sudden recovery and the insanity of the world in general. He is joined by Don Profondo, Don Alvaro, the Marquise Melibea, Count Libenskof. It is clear that Don Alvaro and the Count are rivals for the Marquise's affections. They are all waiting for the new horses which will be necessary for the continuation of the journey, but Madame Cortese, who now arrives, says that she cannot understand why they have not arrived. Alvaro and Libenskof quarrel, the ladies are alarmed, and the Baron and Don Profondo are amused by the idiocy of lovers. ("Non pavento alcun periglio").

A harp prelude is heard, and the poetess Corinna sings offstage of brotherly love, to everyone's delight. ("Arpa gentil")

**Act 2: Scene 1:** Lord Sidney's aria: Madame Cortese is still waiting for the return of her servant Gelsomino with news of the horses. Lord Sidney approaches, and she muses on his unwillingness to approach Corinna who, she is sure, reciprocates his love.

Sidney, alone, laments his situation. ("Invan strappar dal core") His mood lifts when girls singing in praise of Corinna enter with flowers, but then he is disturbed by Don Profondo's strange requests for information about the location of antiquities, and departs.

**Scene 2:** Corinna's duet with the Chevalier Belfiore: Profondo is joined by Corinna and her companion Delia. Corinna asks when the party is to depart, and he and Delia leave Corinna alone while they go to see whether the horses have arrived.

Corinna is joined by the Chevalier, who declares his love. ("Nel suo divin sembiante") She is taken aback and repudiates him. The Chevalier retreats, hoping to try again later, and Corinna returns to her room.

**Scene 3:** Don Profondo's aria: Don Profondo, who has seen the Chevalier with Corinna, reflects that the Countess will scratch the Chevalier's eyes out if she finds out what he has been doing. He then turns his attention to enumerating the effects of his fellow-travellers (as requested by the Baron), noting that their possessions tend to sum up their each of their nations' characteristics. ("Medaglie incomparabili") He looks forward to the impending departure.

The Countess appears, looking for the Chevalier. She is not pleased when Don Profondo tells her that he has been having a poetry lesson. Don Alvaro and Count Libenskof join them, asking about the horses, and the Baron, too, appears, looking woebegone. What has happened? The rest of the travellers arrive, and the Baron produces the courier Zefirino, who is obliged to report that there are no horses to be had anywhere, not even for ready money. There will be no journey to Reims for the coronation!

**Scene 4:** Grand concerted ensemble for 14 voices: Everyone is horrified. ("Ah! A tal colpo inaspettato") But Madame Cortese appears with a letter from Paris. Don Profondo reads it out: the King will return from Reims in a few days and there will be great festivities. Anyone who was unable to get to Reims will be consoled by an even finer spectacle. The Countess steps forward to invite the entire company to her home in Paris for the celebrations. A stagecoach will convey them there on the following day, but in the meantime a grand banquet, with invitations to the public, will be held at the Golden Lily, paid for with the money that would have been spent at the coronation. Any money left over will be given to the poor.

**Act 3: Scene 1:** Duet for the Count and the Marquise: When everyone else has left, the Baron tries to reconcile the jealous Count with the Marquise, who has been seen with Don Alvaro. When he departs, the misunderstanding is resolved and harmony is restored. ("D'alma celeste, oh Dio!")

They depart, and the scene changes to the hotel's garden. Antonio and Maddalena ensure that all is prepared for the banquet. The Baron has engaged a travelling company to provide entertainment with singing and dancing.

**Scene 2: Finale:** After the opening chorus ("L'allegria è un sommo bene"), the Baron introduces a series of short national songs sung by each of the travellers, some of them set to well-known tunes, and ending with, first, a French anthem for the Chevalier and the Countess, then a rustic Tyrolean duet for Madame Cortese and Don Profondo, and finally an improvised solo for Corinna on one of a number of mostly French subjects suggested by each traveller and drawn from an urn. The winning subject turns out, appropriately enough, to be "Charles X, King of France". The opera ends with dances and a chorus.

### **Adriana Lecouvreur**

Adriana Lecouvreur is an opera in four acts by Francesco Cilea to an Italian libretto by Arturo Colautti, based on the 1849 play *Adrienne Lecouvreur* by Eugène Scribe and Ernest Legouvé. It was first performed on 6 November 1902 in Milan.

The same play by Scribe and Legouvé which served as a basis for Cilea's librettists was also used by at least three different librettists for operas carrying exactly the same name, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, and created by three different composers. The first was an opera in three acts by Tommaso Benvenuti (premiered in Milan in 1857). The next two were lyric dramas in 4 acts by Edoardo Vera (to a libretto by Achille de Lauzières) which premiered in Lisbon in 1858, and by Ettore Perosio (to an anonymous libretto), premiered in Geneva in 1889. After Cilea created his own *Adriana*, however, none of those by others were performed anymore and they remain largely unknown today.

The opera is based on the life of the French actress *Adrienne Lecouvreur* (1692–1730). While there are some actual historical figures in the opera, the episode it recounts is largely fictional, its death-by-poisoned violets plot device often signalled as verismo opera's least realistic.

## Characters

|                                                                                                   |               |                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Adriana Lecouvreur (Adrienne Lecouvreur), a famous actress                                        | soprano       | Renata Scotto      |
| Maurizio (Maurice de Saxe), Count of Saxony                                                       | tenor         | Placido Domingo    |
| Princess de Bouillon                                                                              | mezzo-soprano | Elena Obraztsova   |
| Prince de Bouillon                                                                                | bass          | Giancarlo Luccardi |
| The Abbé de Chazeuil                                                                              | tenor         | Florindo Andreolli |
| Michonnet, a stage manager                                                                        | baritone      | Sherrill Milnes    |
| Mlle Jouvenot                                                                                     | soprano       | Lilian Watson      |
| Mlle Dangeville                                                                                   | mezzo-soprano | Anne Murray        |
| Poisson                                                                                           | tenor         | Paul Crook         |
| Quinault                                                                                          | bass          | Paul Hudson        |
| Major-domo                                                                                        | tenor         | Paul Crook         |
| Ambrosian Opera Chorus, John McCarthy Director, Philharmonia Orchestra,<br>Conductor James Levine |               |                    |

## Synopsis

Place: Paris Time: 1730

**Act 1: Backstage at the Comédie-Française:** Preparing for a performance, the company bustle around Michonnet, the stage manager. The Prince de Bouillon, admirer of the actress Duclos, is with his companion, the Abbé. Adriana enters reciting. Complimented, she sings 'Io son l'umile ancella' ("I am the humble servant of the creative spirit"). The Prince hears that Duclos is writing a letter, and arranges for its interception. Left alone with Adriana, Michonnet wants to express his love for her. However, Adriana explains she has a lover: Maurizio, a soldier in the service of the Count of Saxony. She is unaware that Maurizio is in reality the count himself. He enters and declares his love for Adriana, 'La dolcissima effigie'. They agree to meet after the performance. Adriana gives him some violets to put in his buttonhole. The Prince and the Abbé return. They have obtained the letter from Duclos, in which she requests a meeting with Maurizio later that evening near the Prince's villa. The Prince decides to arrange a party for the company at the villa in order to expose Duclos and Maurizio. He sends Duclos's letter on to Maurizio, who then cancels his appointment with Adriana. After receiving his notification on stage, she agrees to join the Prince's party.

**Act 2: A villa by the Seine:** The Princess de Bouillon, not the actress Duclos, is waiting for Maurizio and expresses her love for him: 'Acerba voluttà, dolce tortura'. When he enters, she sees the violets and asks how he came by them. Maurizio presents them to her. Nevertheless, despite being grateful for her help at court, he admits he no longer loves her. Although she guesses he has a lover, he won't reveal her name. The Prince and the Abbé suddenly arrive and the Princess hides. Maurizio realizes they think he is with Duclos. Adriana enters and learns Maurizio's true identity. He tells Adriana the assignation was political. They must arrange the escape of the woman who is in hiding. Adriana trusts him and agrees to help. During the intermezzo that follows, the house is darkened, which Adriana uses to tell the Princess she can escape. However, the two women are mutually suspicious and the rescue attempt turns into a blazing quarrel before the Princess finally leaves. The stage manager Michonnet notices that the Princess has dropped a bracelet, which he gives to Adriana.

**Act 3: The Hôtel de Bouillon:** Maurizio has been imprisoned for debt, whilst the Princess is desperate to discover the identity of her rival. The Prince, who has an interest in chemistry, is storing a powerful poison that the government has asked him to analyse. At a reception given by the Prince and Princess, guests note the arrival of Michonnet and Adriana. The Princess thinks she recognizes the latter's voice. When the Princess announces that Maurizio has been wounded in a duel, Adriana faints. However, soon afterwards, when Maurizio enters uninjured, Adriana is ecstatic. He sings of his war exploits, 'Il russo Mencikoff'. A ballet is performed: the 'Judgement of Paris'. Adriana learns that the bracelet Michonnet found belongs to the Princess. In growing recognition that they are rivals for Maurizio's affection, the Princess and Adriana challenge each other. When the former pointedly suggests that Adriana should recite a scene from 'Ariadne abandoned', the Prince asks instead for a scene from Phèdre. Adriana uses the final lines of the text to make a headstrong attack on the Princess, who determines to have her revenge.

**Act 4: A room in Adriana's house:** Michonnet is waiting. Adriana is consumed with anger and jealousy. Members of the theatre company come to visit her, bringing her presents on her name day and trying to persuade her to return to the theatre. Michonnet has retrieved a diamond necklace, previously pawned by Adriana to help Maurizio pay off his debts. A casket is delivered with a note from Maurizio. Adriana looks at the note and immediately feels unwell. She looks in the box and takes out the faded violets that she had once given Maurizio in the theatre. She is hurt that he should send them back to her. She kisses the flowers, 'Poveri fiori', and throws them in the fire. Maurizio enters. He wishes to marry her. Although they embrace, he realises she is shaking. Maurizio tells her that he didn't send the flowers. She becomes deranged. Michonnet and Maurizio realize that she has been poisoned. For a moment, she becomes lucid again, 'ecco la luce', but then dies.

### **Faust Gounod**

**Faust** is an opera in five acts by Charles Gounod to a French libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré from Carré's play *Faust et Marguerite*, in turn loosely based on *Faust, Part One*. It premiered in the Theatre Lyrique, Paris on 19 March 1859, with influential sets designed by Charles-Antoine Cambon and Joseph Thierry, Jean Émile Daran, Édouard Desplechin, and Philippe Chaperon.

The original version of Faust employed spoken dialogue, and it was in this form that the work was first performed. The manager of the Theatre Lyrique, Léon Carvalho cast his wife Caroline Miolan-Carvalho as Marguerite and there were various changes during production, including the removal and contraction of several numbers. After a successful initial run at the Théâtre Lyrique the publisher Antoine Choudens, who purchased the copyright for 10,000 francs, took the work (now with recitatives replacing the spoken dialogue) on tour through Germany, Belgium, Italy and England.

Performances in Germany followed, with Dresden Semperoper in 1861 being the first to bill the work as *Margarethe* rather than *Faust*. For many years this custom – or alternatively, staging the opera as *Gretchen* – continued in Germany. Some sources claim this was out of respect for part 1 of Goethe's poetic drama, which the opera follows closely. Others claim the opposite: that the retitling was done to emphasise Gounod's reliance on Goethe's characters, and to differentiate it from Louis Spohr's *Faust*, which had held the stage for many years in Germany and had recently appeared (1851) in a three-act revision. It is also possible that the

1861 Dresden title change was out of respect for Spohr's close and long association with the city.

The opera was given for the first time in Italy at La Scala in 1862 and in England at Her Majesty's Theatre, London (in Italian) in 1863. In 1864, when the opera was given at the same venue in English, Gounod took a theme from the prelude to the opera and wrote a new aria for the star baritone Charles Santley in the role of Valentin, 'Even bravest heart may swell'. This number was then translated into French for subsequent productions as "Avant de quitter ces lieux" and has become one of the most familiar pieces from the opera

In 1869 a ballet had to be inserted (into the first scene of the final act) before the work could be played at the Opéra in Paris: it became the most frequently performed opera at that house. With the change from spoken dialogue to sung recitatives, plus the musical and balletic additions, the opera was thus finally transformed into a work following the conventions of grand opera.

It was *Faust* with which the Metropolitan Opera in New York City opened for the first time on 22 October 1883. It was not until the period between 1965 and 1977 that the full version was performed (and then with some minor cuts), and all performances in that production included the *Walpurgisnacht* ballet.

### Cast

|                                            |                |                    |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Faust, an ageing scholar                   | Tenor,         | Francisco Araiza   |
| Mephistopheles, a familiar spirit of Hell  | Bass-baritone, | Evgeny Nesterenko  |
| Marguerite, a young maiden                 | Soprano,       | Kiri te Kanawa     |
| Valentin, a soldier & Marguerite's brother | Baritone,      | Andreas Schmidt    |
| Siebel, a youth in love with Marguerite    | soprano,       | Pamela Coburn      |
| Marthe, Marguerite's guardian              | mezzo-soprano, | Marjana Lipovsek   |
| Wagner, Valentin's friend                  | Baritone,      | Gilles Cachemaille |

with young girls, peasants, students, soldier, witches, queens and celestial voices etc being represented by the Choir of the Bavarian Radio, with the Symphony Orchestra of Bavarian Radio conducted by Sir Colin Davis.

### Synopsis

The opera is set in Germany in the 16<sup>th</sup> century

**Act 1:** Faust, an aging scholar, determines that his studies have come to nothing and have only caused him to miss out on life and love ("Rien! En vain j'interroge"). He attempts to kill himself (twice) with poison but stops each time when he hears a choir. He curses hope and faith, and asks for infernal guidance. Méphistophélès appears (duet: "Me voici") and, with a tempting image of Marguerite at her spinning wheel, persuades Faust to buy Méphistophélès's services on Earth in exchange for Faust's in Hell. Faust's goblet of poison is magically transformed into an elixir of youth, making the aged doctor a handsome young gentleman; the strange companions then set out into the world.

**Act 2:** *At the city gates*

A chorus of students, soldiers and villagers sings a drinking song ("Vin ou Bière"). Valentin, leaving for war with his friend Wagner, entrusts the care of his sister Marguerite to his youthful friend Siebel ("O sainte médaille ... Avant de quitter ces lieux"). Méphistophélès appears, provides the crowd with wine, and sings a rousing, irreverent song about the golden calf ("Le veau d'or"). Méphistophélès predicts Wagner will not return from the war and maligns Marguerite, and Valentin tries to strike him with his sword, which shatters in the air. Valentin and friends use the cross-shaped hilts of their swords to fend off what they now know is an infernal power (chorus: "De l'enfer"). Méphistophélès is joined by Faust and the villagers in a waltz ("Ainsi que la brise légère"). Marguerite appears and Faust declares his admiration, but she refuses Faust's arm out of modesty, a quality that makes him love her even more.

**Act 3: Marguerite's garden**

The lovesick boy Siebel leaves a bouquet for Marguerite ("Faites-lui mes aveux"). Faust sends Méphistophélès in search of a gift for Marguerite and sings a *cavatina* ("Salut, demeure chaste et pure") idealizing Marguerite as a pure child of nature. Méphistophélès brings in a decorated box containing exquisite jewellery and a hand mirror and leaves it on Marguerite's doorstep, next to Siebel's flowers. Marguerite enters, pondering her encounter with Faust at the city gates, and sings a melancholy ballad about the King of Thule ("Il était un roi de Thulé"). Marthe, Marguerite's neighbour, notices the jewellery and says it must be from an admirer. Marguerite tries on the jewels and is captivated by how they enhance her beauty, as she sings the famous aria, the Jewel Song ("Oh dieu! Que de bijoux ... Ah! je ris de me voir si belle en ce miroir"). Méphistophélès and Faust join the women in the garden and romance them. Marguerite allows Faust to kiss her ("Laisse-moi, laisse-moi contempler ton visage"), but then asks him to go away. She sings at her window for his quick return, and Faust, listening, returns to her. Under the watchful eye and malevolent laughter of Méphistophélès, it is clear that Faust's seduction of Marguerite will be successful.

**Act 4: Marguerite's room / A public square outside her house / A cathedral**

After being made pregnant and seemingly abandoned by Faust, Marguerite has given birth and is a social outcast. She sings an aria at her spinning wheel ("Il ne revient pas"). Siebel stands by her. The scene shifts to the square outside Marguerite's house. Valentin's company returns from the war to a military march ("Déposons les armes" and "Gloire immortelle de nos aïeux", the well-known "soldiers' chorus"). Siebel asks Valentin to forgive Marguerite. Valentin rushes to her cottage. While he is inside Faust and Méphistophélès appear, and Méphistophélès, knowing that Marguerite is not in there alone, sings a mocking burlesque of a lover's serenade under Marguerite's window ("Vous qui faites l'endormie"). Valentin takes the bait and comes out of the cottage, now knowing that Faust has debauched his sister. The two men fight, but Faust is reluctant to hurt the brother of the woman he adores. Méphistophélès blocks Valentin's sword, allowing Faust to make the fatal thrust. With his dying breath Valentin blames Marguerite for his death and condemns her to Hell before the assembled townspeople ("Ecoute-moi bien Marguerite"). Marguerite goes to the church and tries to pray there but is stopped, first by the sadistic Méphistophélès and then by a choir of devils. She finishes her prayer but faints when she is cursed again by Méphistophélès.

**Act 5:** Méphistophélès and Faust are surrounded by witches ("Un, deux et trois"). Faust is transported to a cave of queens and courtesans, and Méphistophélès promises to provide Faust with the love of the greatest and most beautiful women in history. An orgiastic ballet suggests the revelry that continues throughout the night. As dawn approaches, Faust sees a vision of Marguerite and calls for her. Méphistophélès helps Faust enter the prison where Marguerite is being held for killing her child. They sing a love duet ("Oui, c'est toi que j'aime"). Méphistophélès states that only a mortal hand can deliver Marguerite from her fate, and Faust offers to rescue her from the hangman, but she prefers to trust her fate to God and His angels ("AnGES purs, anGES radieux"). At the end she asks why Faust's hands are covered in blood, pushes him away, and falls down motionless. Méphistophélès curses, as a voice on high sings "Sauvée!" ("Saved!"). The bells of Easter sound and a chorus of angels sings "Christ est ressuscité!" ("Christ is risen!"). The walls of the prison open, and Marguerite's soul rises to heaven. In despair Faust follows it with his eyes; he falls to his knees and prays. Méphistophélès is turned away by the shining sword of the archangel.

**Don Carlos** is a five-act grand opera composed by Giuseppe Verdi to a French-language libretto by Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle, based on the dramatic play *Don Karlos, Infant von Spanien* (*Don Carlos, Infante of Spain*) by Friedrich Schiller. In addition, several incidents, of which the Forest of Fontainebleau scene and auto-da-fé were the most



substantial, were borrowed from Eugène Cormon's 1846 play *Philippe II, Roi d'Espagne*. It was commissioned and produced by the Théâtre Impérial de l'Opéra (Paris Opera) and given its premiere at the Salle Le Peletier on 11 March 1867.

The first performance in Italian was given at Covent Garden in London in June 1867. The first performance in Italy was in Bologna in October 1867, also in Italian translation. After some revisions by Verdi, it was performed in Italian in Naples in November/December 1872. Verdi was also responsible for a short four-act "Milan version" in which the first act was removed and the ballet omitted (January 1884) but also apparently approved a five-act "Modena version" in which the first act was restored but the ballet still omitted (December 1886).

A co-production between the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris and the Royal Opera in London in 1996 was a "judicious mixture" of music from the original and the revised versions. The production, in French, was directed by Luc Bondy and a recording of that performance is used in this program.

#### **Cast Details:**

|                                                |                               |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Philippe II, King of Spain                     | Jose Van Dam, bass            |
| Don Carlos, Infante of Spain                   | Roberto Alagna, tenor         |
| Rodrigue, Marquis of Posa                      | Thomas Hampson, baritone      |
| The Grand Inquisitor                           | Eric Halfvarson, bass         |
| A Monk                                         | Csaba Airizer, bass           |
| Elisabeth de Valois                            | Karita Mattila, soprano       |
| Princess Eboli                                 | Waltraud Meier, mezzo-soprano |
| Thibault, Page of Elizabeth                    | Anat Efraty, soprano          |
| Count of Lerma                                 | Scot Weir, tenor              |
| A voice from on high                           | Donna Brown, soprano          |
| Chorus of the Chatelet Theatre, Paris          |                               |
| Orchestre de Paris; Antonio Pappano, conductor |                               |

#### **Synopsis**

**Act 1:** The Forest of Fontainebleau in winter.

A prelude and chorus of woodcutters and their wives is heard. They complain of their hard life, made worse by war with Spain. Elisabeth, daughter of the King of France, arrives with her attendants. She reassures the people that her impending marriage to Don Carlos, Infante and son of Philip II, King of Spain, will bring the war to an end, and departs.

Carlos, coming out from hiding, has seen Elisabeth and fallen in love with her ("Je l'ai vue"). When she reappears, he initially pretends to be a member of the Count of Lerma's delegation. She asks him about Don Carlos, whom she has not yet met. Before long, Carlos reveals his true identity and his feelings, which she reciprocates ("De quels transports poignants et doux"). A cannon-shot signifies that peace has been declared between Spain and France. Thibault appears and gives Elisabeth the surprising news that her hand is to be claimed not by Carlos but by his father, Philip. When Lerma and his followers confirm this, Elisabeth is devastated but feels bound to accept, in order to consolidate the peace. She departs for Spain, leaving Carlos equally devastated.

**Act 2: Scene 1:** The cloister of the monastery of Saint-Just (San Jerónimo de Yuste) in Spain.

The scene takes place soon after King Philip II and Elisabeth have married. Monks pray before the tomb of the former Emperor Charles V ("Carlo Quinto"). The monks' leader proclaims that the Emperor was proud but has been humbled through error.

Don Carlos enters, anguished that the woman he loves is now his stepmother.

When Carlos pauses in his lament, the leader of the monks proclaims that the turbulence of the world persists even in sacred places; we cannot rest except in Heaven. The sound of his voice frightens Carlos, who thinks it sounds like that of the Emperor Charles V. Carlos further

notices that the monk physically resembles the Emperor, and recalls hearing rumours that the Emperor's ghost haunts the monastery.

Carlos' dear friend Rodrigue, Marquis of Posa, who has just arrived from the oppressed land of Flanders, enters. The two greet each other joyfully ("J'étais en Flandres").

Posa asks for the Infante's aid on behalf of the suffering people there. Carlos reveals that he loves his stepmother. Posa is first shocked, but then sympathetic. He encourages Carlos to leave Spain and go to Flanders, and to forget his pain by focusing on political activity there. The two men swear eternal friendship ("Dieu, tu semas dans nos âmes").

King Philip and his new wife, with their attendants, enter also to do homage at Charles V's tomb, while Don Carlos laments his lost love.

**Scene 2:** A garden near the gates of the monastery.

Princess Eboli sings the Veil Song ("Au palais des fées") about a Moorish King trying to seduce an alluring veiled beauty, who turns out to be his own neglected wife. Elisabeth enters. Posa gives her a letter from France, which covers a secret note from Don Carlos. At his urging ("L'Infant Carlos, notre espérance"), Elisabeth agrees to see the Infante alone. Unaware of this relationship, Eboli infers that she, Eboli, is the one Don Carlos loves.

When they are alone, Don Carlos tells Elisabeth that he is miserable, and asks her to request the King to send him to Flanders. She promptly agrees, provoking Carlos to renew his declarations of love, which she piously rejects. Don Carlos exits in a frenzy, shouting that he must be under a curse. The King enters and becomes angry because the Queen is alone and unattended. His suspicions are insulting to her. He orders the lady-in-waiting who was meant to be attending her, the Countess of Aremburg, to return to France, prompting Elisabeth to sing a sorrowful farewell-aria ("Oh ma chère compagne").

The King now approaches Posa, with whose character and activism he is impressed, and offers to reward him for his loyalty and service. Posa begs the King to stop oppressing the people of Flanders. The King calls Posa's idealism unrealistic and warns that the Grand Inquisitor is watching him. The King confides in Posa, telling him that he fears that Carlos is having an affair with Elisabeth. Posa replies that Carlos is innocent, and offers to watch Elisabeth and to be responsible for her good behavior. The King gratefully accepts this offer, and again warns Posa to beware of the Grand Inquisitor.

**Act 3: Scene 1:** Evening in the Queen's gardens in Madrid.

Elisabeth is tired, and wishes to concentrate on the following day's coronation of the King. To avoid the divertissement planned for the evening, she exchanges masks with Eboli, assuming that thereby her absence will not be noticed, and leaves.

At midnight, Don Carlos enters, clutching a note suggesting a tryst in the gardens. Although he thinks this is from Elisabeth, it is really from Eboli. Eboli, who still thinks Don Carlos loves her, enters. Don Carlos mistakes her for Elisabeth in the dark, and passionately declares his love. When he sees Eboli's face, he realizes his error and recoils from her. Eboli guesses his secret—that he was expecting the Queen, whom he loves. She threatens to tell the King that Elisabeth and Carlos are lovers. Carlos, terrified, begs for mercy. Posa enters, and warns her not to cross him; he is the King's confidant. Eboli replies by hinting darkly that she is a formidable and dangerous foe, with power which Posa does not yet know about. (Her power is that she is having an affair with the King, but she does not reveal this yet.) Posa draws his dagger, intending to stab her to death, but reconsiders, spares her, and declares his trust in the Lord. Eboli exits in a vengeful rage. Posa advises Carlos to entrust to him any sensitive, potentially incriminating political documents that he may have and, when Carlos agrees, they reaffirm their friendship.

**Scene 2:** The square outside the Cathedral of Valladolid.

Preparations are being made for an auto-da-fé, the public parade and burning of condemned heretics. While the people celebrate, monks drag the condemned to the woodpile. A royal

procession follows, and the King addresses the populace, promising to protect them with fire and sword. Don Carlos enters with six Flemish envoys, who plead with the King for their country's freedom. Although the people and the court are sympathetic, the King, supported by the monks, orders his guards to arrest the envoys. Carlos demands that the King grant him authority to govern Flanders; the King scornfully refuses. Enraged, Carlos draws his sword against the King. The King calls for help but the guards will not attack Don Carlos. Posa realizes that actually attacking the King would be disastrous for Carlos. He steps forward and defuses the situation by taking Carlos' sword from him. Carlos, astonished, yields to his friend without resisting. Relieved and grateful, the King raises Posa to the rank of Duke. The guards arrest Carlos, the monks fire the woodpile, and as the flames start to rise, a heavenly voice can be heard promising heavenly peace to the condemned souls.

**Act 4: Scene 1:** Dawn in King Philip's study in Madrid.

Alone and suffering from insomnia, the King, in a reverie, laments that Elisabeth has never loved him, that his position means that he has to be eternally vigilant and that he will only sleep properly when he is in his tomb in the Escorial (Aria: "Elle ne m'aime pas"). The blind, ninety-year-old Grand Inquisitor is announced and shuffles into the King's apartment. When the King asks if the Church will object to him putting his own son to death, the Inquisitor replies that the King will be in good company: God sacrificed His own son. In return for his support, the Inquisitor demands that the King have Posa killed. The King refuses at first to kill his friend, whom he admires and likes. However, the Grand Inquisitor reminds the King that the Inquisition can take down any king; he has created and destroyed other rulers before. Frightened and overwhelmed, the King begs the Grand Inquisitor to forget about the past discussion. The latter replies "Peut-être" (perhaps!) and leaves. The King bitterly muses on his helplessness to oppose the Church.

Elisabeth enters, alarmed at the apparent theft of her jewel casket. However, the King produces it and points to the portrait of Don Carlos which it contains, accusing her of adultery. She protests her innocence but, when the King threatens her, she faints. In response to his calls for help, into the chamber come Eboli and Posa. Their laments of suspicion cause the King to realize that he has been wrong to suspect his wife ("Maudit soit le soupçon infâme"). Aside, Posa resolves to save Carlos, though it may mean his own death. Eboli feels remorse for betraying Elisabeth; the latter, recovering, expresses her despair.

Elisabeth and Eboli are left together. Eboli confesses that it was she who told the King that Elisabeth and Carlos were having an affair, for revenge against Carlos for having rejected her. Eboli also confesses that she herself is guilty of that which she accused the Queen, and has become the King's mistress. Elisabeth leaves, and the Count di Lerma orders Eboli to choose between exile or the convent, then leaves.

Eboli, left alone, curses her own beauty and pride, and resolves to make amends by trying to save Carlos from the Inquisition ("O don fatal")

**Scene 2:** Don Carlos's prison.

Posa arrives and tells Carlos that he has saved Carlos from being executed, by allowing himself to be incriminated by the politically sensitive documents which he had obtained from Carlos earlier ("C'est mon jour suprême"). A shadowy figure appears—one of the Grand Inquisitor's assassins—and shoots Posa in the chest. As he dies, Posa tells Carlos that Elisabeth will meet him at Saint-Just the following day. He adds that he is content to die if his friend can save Flanders and rule over a happier Spain ("Ah, je meurs, l'âme joyeuse"). At that moment, the King enters, offering his son freedom, as Posa had arranged. Carlos reproaches him for having murdered Posa. The King sees that Posa is dead and cries out in sorrow.

Bells ring as Elisabeth and Eboli now enter. The crowd pushes its way into the prison and threatens the King, demanding the release of Carlos. In the confusion, Eboli escapes with Carlos. The people are brave enough at first in the presence of the King, but they are terrified

by the arrival of the Grand Inquisitor, and instantly obey his angry command to quiet down and pay homage to the King.

**Act 5:** The moonlit cloister of the monastery of San Yuste.

Elisabeth kneels before the tomb of Charles V. She is committed to help Don Carlos on his way to fulfill his destiny in Flanders, but she herself longs only for death ("Toi qui sus le néant"). Carlos appears and tells her that he has overcome his desire for her; he now loves her honorably, as a son loves his mother. They say a final farewell, promising to meet again in Heaven ("Au revoir dans un monde où la vie est meilleure").

The King and the Grand Inquisitor enter, with several armed guards. The King infers that Carlos and Elisabeth have been lovers and demands that they both be immediately killed in a double sacrifice. The Inquisitor confirms that the Inquisition will do its duty.

Defending himself, Carlos retreats towards the tomb of Charles V. The gate opens, the Monk appears, draws Carlos into his arms, covers him with his coat and sings: "My son, the pains of the earth still follow us in this place, the peace your heart hopes for is found only with God." The King and the Inquisitor recognize the Monk's voice: he is the King's father, Charles V himself, who was believed dead. As the curtain slowly falls, the Monk leads Carlos into the cloister and sanctuary to the chanting of monks in the chapel.