

## OPERAS FOR APRIL 2026

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### Stories of the Operas

**Betrothal in a Monastery Op. 86** is an opera by Sergei Prokofiev, his sixth. The libretto, in Russian, was by the composer and Mira Mendelson (his companion in later life), and was based on Richard Brinsley Sheridan's ballad opera libretto for *The Duenna* by Thomas Linley the younger.

Prokofiev began the work in 1940, and it was in rehearsal that year, but World War II halted production of the opera. The composer revised the score as a refugee in Almaty in 1943 where major artists, writers and composers had been isolated due to the war. The first performance was on 3 November 1946 at the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad.

#### The Cast

Don Jerome	Nikolai Gassiev
Don Ferdinand	Alexander Gergalov
Louisa	Anna Netrebko
The Duenna	Larissa Diadkova
Don Antonio	Evgeny Akimov
Clara d'Almanza	Marianana Tarassova
Mendoza	Sergei Alexashkin

The Orchestra & Chorus of the Kirov Opera St Petersburg    Conductor Valery Gergiev

#### Synopsis

##### Act 1

Don Jerome arranges to marry his daughter Louisa to Mendoza, an ugly but very rich old fish merchant who has not seen Louisa yet. Jerome hears the young and very poor Antonio serenade Louisa and vows that the wedding of his daughter should take place soon. At the same time Ferdinand, Louisa's brother, laments the capriciousness of his beloved Clara.

##### Act Two

Louisa's duenna concocts a plan that will enable Louisa to marry Antonio and at the same time win Mendoza and his money for herself. The idea is that Don Jerome should believe that the duenna is acting as a go between for the young lovers. Enraged, he will of course dismiss her and Luisa, disguised in the duenna's clothes will escape and elope with Antonio and the duenna herself, disguised as Louisa, will marry Mendoza.

After escaping, Louisa meets with Clara who, feigning distress at her lover's (who is Louisa's brother Ferdinand) over-ardent behavior, has decided to take refuge in a monastery. Louisa, this time disguised as Clara, asks Mendoza, who has never met her, to help in finding her lover Antonio.

At Don Jerome's house Mendoza meets the duenna, disguised as Louisa, and is won over by her flattery and the two decide to elope.

### Act Three

Antonio meets the real Louisa and Mendoza, still ignorant of her true identity, smiles at the young lovers. Don Jerome, interrupted in his amateur music making, unwittingly blesses the separate marriages of Louisa and the duenna. Clara still pines for Ferdinand.

### Act Four

Mendoza and Antonio arrive at the monastery where the monks sing a boisterous drinking-song. Ferdinand also arrives and, believing that Antonio is about to marry Clara, starts a fight. Confusions as resolved and the monks bless all three marriages. At the wedding ball planned for Louisa, Don Jerome learns of the turns of events and is eventually reconciled, he realizes that his daughter has married a pauper but his son has married a rich heiress.

**Giovanna d'Arco** [Verdi] (Joan of Arc) is an operatic dramma lirico with a prologue and three acts by Giuseppe Verdi set to an Italian libretto by Temistocle Solera, who had prepared the libretti for both Nabucco and I Lombardi. It is Verdi's seventh opera.

The work partly reflects the story of Joan of Arc and appears to be loosely based on the play Die Jungfrau von Orleans by Friedrich von Schiller. After writing the music over the autumn and winter of 1844/45, Verdi's opera had its first performance at Teatro alla Scala in Milan on 15 February 1845.

### Cast

Charles VII	Tenor	Placido Domingo
Giacomo	Baritone	Sherrill Milnes
Giovanna	Soprano	Montserrat Caballe
Delil	Tenor	Keith Irwen
Talbot	Bass	Robert Lloyd
Ambrosian Opera Chorus & the London Symphony Orchestra		
Conducted by James Levine		

### Synopsis

Time: 1429 Place: Domrémy, Rheims and near Rouen, France

Prologue: Scene 1: The French village of Domrémy

Charles (the not-yet-crowned King of France) describes to his officers and the villagers his vision of the Virgin Mary commanding him to surrender to the invading English army and laying down his weapons at the foot of a giant oak tree. Later, he expresses his frustration with the limitations of being a ruler.

#### Scene 2: A forest

By a giant oak tree, Giacomo prays for the safety of his daughter Giovanna, who before she falls asleep by a nearby shrine offers prayers to be chosen to lead the French forces. Suddenly, Charles arrives, prepared to lay down his arms at the base of the tree. Meanwhile, the sleeping Giovanna has visions in which angels ask her to become a soldier and lead France to victory She cries out that she is ready to do so. Charles overhears her and thrills at her courage. Her father Giacomo weeps, believing that his daughter has given her soul to the Devil out of her devotion to the future King.

#### Act 1: Scene 1: Near Reims

Commander Talbot of the English army tries to convince his discouraged soldiers that their imminent surrender to the French is not due to forces of evil. Giacomo arrives and offers up his daughter, believing her to be under the influence of the Devil.

**Scene 2:** The French court at Reims

Preparations are under way for Charles' coronation. Giovanna longs for her simple life back home. Charles confesses his love for Giovanna. She withdraws despite her feelings toward the King, because her voices have warned her against earthly love. Charles is taken to the Cathedral at Reims for his coronation.

**Act 2:** The Cathedral square

The villagers of Reims have gathered in the Cathedral square to celebrate Giovanna's victory over the English army. The French soldiers lead Charles into the Cathedral. Giacomo has decided he must repudiate his daughter who, he believes, has entered a pact with the Devil. He denounces her to the villagers and they are persuaded, although the King refuses to listen. Charles pleads with Giovanna to defend herself, but she refuses.

**Act 3:** At the stake

Giovanna has been captured by the English army and is awaiting her death at the stake. She has visions of battlefield victories and begs God to stand by her, explaining how she has shown her obedience by forsaking her worldly love for the King as the voices had commanded. Giacomo overhears her pleas and recognizes his error. He loosens his daughter's bonds and she escapes. She rushes to the battlefield to turn French defeat into victory once more.

Giacomo pleads with the King, first for punishment and then for forgiveness, which Charles grants. Charles learns of the French victory on the battlefield but also of Giovanna's death. As her body is carried in, Giovanna suddenly revives. Giacomo reclaims his daughter, and the King professes his love. The angels sing of salvation and victory, as Giovanna dies and ascends into heaven.

**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	Václav Zitek
Dalibor, a knight	tenor	Vilém Příbyl
Budivoj, Commander of the castle guard	baritone	Bohuslav Maršík
Beneš, the jailor	bass	Joroslav Horáček
Vítek, one of Dalibor's mercenaries	tenor	Miloš Ježil
Milada, sister of the burgrave of Ploškovice	soprano	Eva Děpoltová

Jitka, a village maiden on Dalibor's estate      soprano      Nadia Šormová  
 First judge      bass      Karel Hanuš  
 Brno State Opera Chorus & Brno State Philharmonic Orchestra  
 Conductor: Vaclav Smetáček

### 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 Víték 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.]

### Fedora

### Giordano

Fedora is an opera in three acts by Umberto Giordano to an Italian libretto by Arturo Colautti, based on the play *Fédora* by Victorien Sardou. Along with *Andrea Chénier* and *Siberia*, it is one of the most notable works of Giordano.

It was first performed at the Teatro Lirico in Milan on 17 November 1898 conducted by the composer with Gemma Bellincioni creating the role of Fedora, and Enrico Caruso as her lover, Loris Ipanov.

### Roles

Princess Fedora Romazov	soprano	Magda Olivero
Count Loris Ipanov	tenor	Mario del Monaco
Countess Olga Sukarev	soprano	Lucia Cappellino
De Siriex, a diplomat	baritone	Tito Gobbi
Desirè, a servant	tenor	Athos Cesarini
Dimitri, a groom	soprano	Kiri te Kanawa
Grech, a police inspector	bass	Silvio Maionoca
Lorek, a surgeon	baritone	Leonardo Monreale
Cirillo, a coachman	baritone	Peter Binder

Baron Rouvel	tenor	Piero de Palma
Borov, a doctor	baritone	Virgilio Carbonari
Boleslao Lazinski,	a pianist	Pascal Rogé
Orchestra & Chorus of the Monte Carlo National Opera Conductor Lamberto Gardelli		

### **Synopsis**

**Act 1:** St. Petersburg, 1881. A winter's night in the palace of Count Vladimir Andrejevich Princess Fedora, who is to marry the Count the following day, arrives and sings of her love for him, unaware that the dissolute Count has betrayed her with another woman. The sound of sleigh-bells is heard, and the Count is brought in mortally wounded. Doctors and a priest are summoned, and the servants are questioned. It is proposed that Count Loris Ipanov, a suspected Nihilist sympathizer, was probably the assassin. De Siriex (a diplomat), and Grech (a police inspector) plan an investigation. Fedora swears on the jewelled Byzantine cross she is wearing that Count Andrejevich's death will be avenged.

### **Act 2:** Paris

Fedora has followed Loris Ipanov there to avenge her fiancé's death. There is a reception at Fedora's house. Boleslao Lazinski, a virtuoso pianist is playing for the party-goers. Ipanov arrives and declares his love for Fedora. She tells him that she is returning to Russia the following day. Loris is desperate because he has been exiled from Russia and cannot follow her. He confesses to Fedora that it was he who had killed Count Vladimir. Fedora asks him to return after the reception is over to tell her the whole story. When she is alone, Fedora writes a letter to the chief of the Imperial Police in Russia accusing Ipanov of Count Vladimir's murder. Loris returns and confesses that he killed Count Vladimir because he had discovered that he and his wife were lovers. The night of the homicide, Ipanov had discovered them together. Vladimir shot at Ipanov and wounded him. Ipanov returned fire, killing Vladimir. Fedora realizes that she has fallen in love with Ipanov, and that he killed not for political ends, but to defend his honour. They embrace and she convinces him to spend the night with her.

### **Act 3** The Bernese Oberland in Switzerland

Loris and Fedora are now lovers and living in her villa. With them is her friend, Countess Olga Sukarev. De Siriex arrives to invite Olga on a bicycle ride. He tells Fedora that as a result of the letter she had written to the police chief, Loris's brother, Valeriano, was arrested for being part of the plot to murder Count Andrejevich and imprisoned in a fortress on the Neva river. One night the river flooded and the young man was drowned. When Loris's mother heard the news, she collapsed and died. Fedora is anguished – she has been the cause of two deaths. Loris receives a letter from a friend in Russia who tells him of the deaths of his mother and brother and that the cause was a woman living in Paris who had written a letter denouncing him to the police. Fedora confesses to Loris that she had written the letter and begs his forgiveness. When he initially refuses and curses her, Fedora swallows poison which she had hidden in the Byzantine cross she always wore around her neck. Loris begs the doctor to save her, but it is too late. Fedora dies in Loris's arms.

### **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
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,  
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.