

***Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786) - Overture and “Tuto è disposto... Aprite un po’ quegli occhi”**

Le Nozze di Figaro by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, opened in Vienna on the 1st of May of 1786 at the Burgtheater, two years after the premiere of the original play by Beaumarchais (*La folle journée, ou Le mariage du Figaro*). A sequel to the famous and quite successful, *Le barbier de Séville*, it is the second in the Beaumarchais’ trilogy. In *Le Nozze*, everything happens in one day: specifically, the wedding day between Figaro, a servant of the Count Almaviva, and Susanna, the most trustful servant to Countess Rossina. Beaumarchais’ choice for the secondary title, “The crazy day” assertively lies on the characteristically entangled plot making each of the characters play a game of schemes, lies, and secrets. In Da Ponte’s adaptation, opposite to the social and political critique of the original play, the characters are simply driven by their individualistic humanistic nature, predetermined by their social rank.

Mozart opens the story with a unique and memorable overture; immediately the spirit of craziness can be perceived within the first eighteen bars. The strings and bassoons, play *pianissimo* in unison a series of fast scales modulated by chromatic motives, then after four bars of repeated eighths from the cellos, and a small response from the wind section, the whole orchestra strikes a *subito fortissimo* that hints at the twists and turns created by the scheming characters of the story while enthusiastic providing lightness through a humanly naïve mood.

Aprite un po’ quegli occhi is Figaro’s final aria in the fourth act. Figaro addresses the audience directly for the first time in the opera. This is certainly not the same man from the Barber anymore. Figaro, with all his wit, has always believed he was the cleverest - the one who pulled the strings and played the games as revenge to outdo the Count. However, he realizes he has been played the fool by the woman he loves, proving that she is smarter than him. Fed up with women and their shenanigans, he warns all men not to fall for the tricks of the other sex.

Figaro

*Aprite un po’ quegli occhi
Tutto è disposto:
L’ora dovrebbe esser vicina;
Io sento gente...è dessa!
Non è alcun;
Buia è la notte...
Ed io comincio omai a fare
Il scimunito mestiere di marito...
Ingrata!
Nel memento della mia cerimonia
Ei godeva leggendo:
E nel vederlo io rideva
Di me senza saperlo.*

*Oh Susanna! Susanna!
Quanta pena mi costi!
Con quell’ingenua faccia,
Con quegli occhi innocenti,
Chi creduto l’avria? Ah!
Che il fidarse a donna, è ognor follia.*

*Aprite un po’ quegli occhi,
Uomini incauti e sciocchi,
Guardate queste femmine,
Guardate cosa son!
Queste chiamate
dee Dagli ingannati sensi,
A cui tributa incensi
La debole ragion.*

Figaro

Open your eyes
Everything is set:
the hour should be near;
I can hear people... it is her!
It’s nobody;
The night is dark...
and I am just beginning to practice
the stupid work of being a husband...
You ungrateful!
While remembering my ceremony
he was enjoying in reading:
And while I was seeing it,
I was laughing at me without knowing it.

Oh, Susanna! Susanna!
What a great suffering you cost me!
With your ingenuous face,
with your innocent eyes,
who would imagine it? Ah!
that it’s foul to trust in a woman.

Open your eyes,
you incautious and stupid men
Look at these women
Look what they are!
These you call goddesses
with deceived senses,
to whom the weak reason
tributes incenses.

*Son streghe che incantano
Per farci penar,
Sirene che cantano
Per farci affogar,
Civette che allettano
Per trarci le piume,
Comete che brillano
Per toglierci il lume.*

*Son rose spinose
Son volpi vezzose;
Son orse benigne,
Colombe maligne,
Maestre d'inganni,
Amiche d'affanni,
Che fingono, mentono,
Amore non senton,
Non senton pietà,
No, no, no, no no!*

*Il resto no dico,
Già ognuno lo sa.*

They are witches who enchant
only to make us pain,
Sirens who sing
to draw us,
Owls who attract
to take out our feathers
Comets who shine
to take our light away.

They're thorny roses
they're charming foxes
they're benign bears,
malign doves,
masters in cheating
friends of worries
who pretend, lie,
don't feel any love,
don't feel any pity,
no, no, no, no, no!

I don't tell all the rest,
anybody knows that.

Rinaldo (1711) - "Venti turbini"

Rinaldo by German-British composer, George Frideric Handel, was considered a tremendous success and established the status of Italian opera in England for over two decades during the 18th century. Based very loosely on the 16th century epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata (Jerusalem Delivered)* by Torquato Tasso, *Rinaldo* is a pastiche of an enigmatically historical rendition of the 1099 Siege of Jerusalem, peppered with classical Greco-Roman references, and set in a world inhabited by sorcerers, kings, mermaids, and an entire bestiary's worth of dragons and assorted monsters.

The story introduces General Goffredo and the mighty knight Rinaldo, who are at war with Argante, the blustering king of Jerusalem, and his mistress, the wicked enchantress Armida. Goffredo promises that his daughter Almirena will marry Rinaldo once they achieve victory. But when Armida kidnaps Almirena, our heroes embark on a quest to find a magician who will help them rescue Almirena and defeat Armida and her minions. Rinaldo sings "Venti, turbini" as he swears revenge on Armida for abducting Almirena.

Rinaldo

*Venti, turbini, prestate
Le vostre ali a questo piè!
Cieli, numi, il braccio armate
Contro chi pena mi diè!*

Rinaldo

Winds and Temests lend me swiftness,
Let me hurl thy Thunder Jove,
To revenge me on those Wretches,
That wou'd rob me of my Love

***Giulio Cesare* (1724) – “E pur così in un giorno... Piangerò la sorte mia”**

Giulio Cesare by German-British composer, George Frideric Handel, was first performed at the King's Theatre on the Haymarket in 1724. The opera portrays the love story between two renowned figures of antiquity: Giulio Cesare and Cleopatra. In the aria “*E pur così in un giorno...Piangerò la sorte mia*,” Cleopatra expresses profound sadness and sorrow while imprisoned, lamenting not only the loss of the battle but also the fear of losing her great love.

Recitativo

Cleopatra

E pur così in un Giorno perdo fasti e grandezze?
Ahi fato rio!
Cesare, il mio bel nume, è forse estinto;
Cornelia e Sesto inermi son,
né sanno darmi soccorso.
O dio! Non resta alcuna speme al viver mio.

Aria

Piangerò la sorte mia,
sì crudele e tanto ria,
finché vita in petto avrò.

Ma poi morta d'ogn'intorno il tiranno e notte e giorno fatta
spettro agiterò.

Recitative

Cleopatra

And thus, in a day do I lose splendor and greatness?
Ah fate!
Caesar, my beautiful god, is perhaps dead;
Cornelia and Sesto are defenseless,
nor do they know how to help me.
Hate! There no hope left for my life.

Aria

I will mourn my fate,
so cruel and so much,
as long as I have life in my chest.

But after I am dead, I will become a ghost and disturb the
tyrant from all sides both night and day.

***La Pasión Según San Marcos* (2000) – “Lúa Descolorida”**

Osvaldo Golijov, an Argentinian composer, descended from Romanian and Ukrainian immigrants, grew up with classical music, Jewish liturgical music, and the tango music of Argentina, all of which became influences in his compositions. He describes “*Lúa Descolorida*” as a piece that defines “despair in a way that is simultaneously tender and tragic.” This radiant piece, composed in 2000, is a part of his work his larger work, *La Pasión Según San Marcos*. The talented singer Dawn Upshaw served as a profound inspiration for the composition: “I wanted to give her a piece so radiant that it would bring an echo of the single tear that Schubert brings without warning in his voicing of a G major chord.” In 2002, she recorded the piece with the Minnesota Orchestra.

The text is by the Spanish poet, Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885), who wrote first in her native Gallego (the language of the Galicia region), in spite of the disdain of other Spanish writers. Her poetry in her native dialect was the first to establish a body of literature in Galicia. She also wrote in Spanish and is considered one of the important forerunners of twentieth century Spanish poetry. Her life was always tinged with sadness, as is shown in “*Lúa Descolorida*.” The poet defines despair as she asks the colorless moon to take her “. . . body and soul together/ To a place where I won't be remembered, / Neither in this world, nor in the heights above.”

The majority of the piece sits in the singers low, colorful, chesty register, creating a mournful sobbing color throughout the declamation of text. Golijov’s melismas frame the piece, and take the singer seamlessly through their sparkling higher registers. Although it is clear that the vocal writing in this piece is virtuosic, the atmosphere of this song feels stunningly and appropriately intimate. The composer describes the music in his Notes: “The song is at once a slow-motion ride on a cosmic horse, a homage to Couperin's melismas in his Lessons of Tenebrae, velvet bells coming from three different churches, heaven as seen once by Yeats, a death lullaby, and the ladder of Jacob's dream.”

Text by the Spanish poet, Rosalía de Castro

Lúa descolorida
Como cor de ouro pálido
Vesme i eu non quixera
Me vises de tan alto
Ó espazo que recorres
Lévame, caladiña, nun teu raio
Astro das almas orfas
Lúa descolorida
Eu ben sei que n'alumas
Tristeza cal a miña
Vai contalo ó teu dono
E dille que me leve adonde habita
Mais non lle contes nada
Descolorida lúa
Pois nin neste nin noutros
Mundos teréis fortuna
Se sabe onde a morte
Ten a morada escura
Dille que corpo e alma xuntamente
Me leve adonde non recorden nunca
Nin no mundo en que estou nin nas alturas

English Translation by Osvaldo Golijov

Moon, colorless
like the color of pale gold:
You see me here and I wouldn't like you
to see me from the heights above.
Take me, silently, in your ray
to the space of your journey.
Star of the orphan souls,
Moon, colorless:
I know that you don't illuminate
sadness as sad as mine.
Go and tell it to your master
and tell him to take me to his place.
But don't tell him anything,
Moon, colorless,
because my fate won't change
here or in other worlds.
If you know where Death
has her dark mansion,
Tell her to take my body and soul together
To a place where I won't be remembered,
Neither in this world, nor in the heights above.

***L'Elisir d'Amore* (1832) – “Una furtiva lagrima”**

L'Elisir d'Amore by Gaetano Donzetti was first performed in May 1832 at the Teatro della Canobbiana in Milan. This comic opera in two acts tells the story of the love story between two young people, Nemorino and Adina. In the second act, the famous tenor aria “*Una furtiva lagrima*” is sung by Nemorino when he realizes that his beloved Adina truly cares for him, as he notices a tear in her eye when she sees him surrounded by other women.

Nemorino

*Una furtiva lagrima
negli occhi suoi spuntò:
Quelle festose giovani
invidiar sembrò.
Che più cercando io vo?
Che più cercando io vo?
M'ama! Sì, m'ama, lo vedo. Lo vedo.
Un solo instante i palpiti
del suo bel cor sentir!
I miei sospir, confondere
per poco a' suoi sospir!
I palpiti, i palpiti sentir,
confondere i miei coi suoi sospir...
Cielo! Si può morir!
Di più non chiedo, non chiedo.
Ah, cielo! Si può! Sì, può morir!
Di più non chiedo, non chiedo.
Si può morire! Si può morir d'amor.*

Nemorino

A single secret tear
from her eye did spring:
as if she envied all the youths
that laughingly passed her by.
What more searching need I do?
What more searching need I do?
She loves me! Yes, she loves me, I see it. I see it.
For just an instant the beating
of her beautiful heart I could feel!
As if my sighs were hers,
and her sighs were mine!
The beating, the beating of her heart I could feel,
to merge my sighs with hers...
Heavens! Yes, I could die!
I could ask for nothing more, nothing more.
Oh, heavens! Yes, I could, I could die!
I could ask for nothing more, nothing more.
Yes, I could die! Yes, I could die of love.

Don Pasquale (1843) – “Quel guardo il cavaliere... so anch’io la virtù magica”

Don Pasquale by Gaetano Donzetti is a highly acclaimed opera that has been a success since its premiere at Teatro La Scala in Milan, Italy in 1843. The opera has captivated audiences worldwide, with its American premiere occurring in 1846 in New York, where it was performed entirely in English. In this aria, Norina is reading a novel about love. After reading a passage aloud, she explains that she knows all the tricks of ensnaring a man and showcases her skill in making a man do whatever she desires. This aria is regarded as one of the most famous pieces in the operatic repertoire.

Norina

(leggendo)

*“Quel guardo il cavaliere
in mezzo al cor trafisse,
piegò il ginocchio e disse:
Son vostro cavalier!
E tanto era in quel guardo
sapor di paradiso,
che il cavalier Riccardo,
tutto d'amor conquiso,
giurò che ad altra mai
non volgeria il pensier.”*

Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

*So anch'io la virtù magica
d'un guardo a tempo e loco,
so anch'io come si bruciano
i cori a lento foco;
d'un breve sorrisetto
conosco anch'io l'effetto,
di menzognera lagrima,
d'un subito languor.
Conosco i mille modi
dell'amorose frodi,
i vezzi e l'arti facili
per adescare un cor.
Ho testa bizzarra,
son pronta, vivace...
brillare mi piace,
mi piace scherzar.
Se monto in furore,
di rado sto al segno,
ma in riso lo sdegno
fo presto a cangiar.
Ho testa bizzarra,
ma core eccellente.*

Norina

(reading)

"I look at the knight
in the middle of his heart he was pierced,
he bent his knee and said:
I am your cavalier!
And so much was in that look
tasty of paradise,
that the Cavalier Riccardo,
all of love conquered,
he swore that to another never
I do not want to think about it. "

Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

I know magic virtue too
of a time and place guard,
I know how they burn themselves
slow-focus choirs;
of a short smile
I also know the effect,
of liar tear,
of an immediately languor.
I know the thousand ways
of love frauds,
the easy ways and the arts
to lure a cor.
I have a weird head,
I'm ready, lively ...
I like to shine
I like joking.
If I mount in fury,
I'm rarely at the sign,
but in laughter the indignation
I'll soon be able to change it.
I have a weird head,
but excellent core.

INTERMISSION

Wesendonck Lieder (1862) – (Selections)

After the Dresden Uprising in 1849, Richard Wagner and his wife Minna fled to Zürich, eventually finding asylum on the estate of a wealthy silk merchant, Otto Wesendonck and his wife, Mathilde Wesendonck. Gradually, Wagner and Mathilde, a poet and author, entered into a passionate love affair. Both marriages were in trouble; proximity and opportunity contributed to an intimate, intense relationship. In August of 1857, he set aside work on the opera *Siegfried* to begin work on the poem for *Tristan und Isolde*. As he worked at the poem of Tristan, the close proximity to Mathilde induced him to read to her each evening his work in progress.

This intense interaction with the poet-composer inspired Mathilde to compose five passionate poems of her own, which Wagner set for voice and piano, during the winter of 1857. They have become known as the Wesendonck Lieder. It has been reported that Wagner stated “I have done nothing better than these songs.” It is clear that Wagner identified himself in the poems, finding in these and in her the perfect love which had eluded him throughout his lifetime. Mathilde later wrote in her memoirs that he took each of her poems upon their completion and gave to them a “supreme transfiguration and consecration” with his music.

Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, a tale of intense passion probably reflected his feelings around his relationship with Mathilde. The setting of her poems date from the early days of his work on *Tristan*. The musical similarities, especially in harmonic idiom, can be discerned by those familiar with both works. For the publication of the songs in 1862, he marked two of them ‘studies for *Tristan und Isolde*’.

This concert features three of the five poems. “*Der Engel*” is based on a passage from *Das Rheingold*. The text relates the compassion of angels who risk the force of gravity to carry earthly spirits up to heaven. Wagner sets the first and last stanzas in G major when describing the angelic realm, contrasting it with G minor to render the pained human heart languishing on earth. “*Stehe still*” is a plea to Time to stop its ceaseless circles so that the supplicant might experience the emptiness of pure being. The restlessness of the music setting in the first two stanzas gives way to a more static, tender music as “eye drinks rapture from eye.” Finally, in “*Schmerzen*,” the poet reflects upon the paradox that “if death brings forth life/and sorrow only bring delight/O how thankful am I that Nature/granted me such sorrows.”

The poetry is not regarded as being of the highest quality by anyone, either today or when it was penned, but the forces of infatuation have been known to over-ride disinterested detachment especially in matters of judgement. This may have been such a case with Wagner at the time. Regardless these songs are among Wagner’s most frequently performed non-operatic works.

Der Engel

German source: Mathilde Wesendonck

*In der Kindheit frühen Tagen
Hört ich oft von Engeln sagen,
Die des Himmels hehre Wonne
Tauschen mit der Erdensonne,*

*Daß, wo bang ein Herz in Sorgen
Schmachtet vor der Welt verborgen,
Daß, wo still es will verbluten,
Und vergehn in Tränenfluten,*

*Daß, wo brünstig sein Gebet
Einzig um Erlösung fleht,
Da der Engel niederschwebt,
Und es sanft gen Himmel hebt.*

*Ja, es stieg auch mir ein Engel nieder,
Und auf leuchtendem Gefieder
Führt er, ferne jedem Schmerz,
Meinen Geist nun himmelwärts!*

The angel

In the early days of childhood
I often heard tell of angels
Who exchange heaven’s pure bliss
For the sun of earth,

So that, when a sorrowful heart
Hides its yearning from the world
And would silently bleed away
And dissolve in streams of tears,

And when its fervent prayer
Begs only for deliverance,
That angel will fly down
And gently raise the heart to heaven.

And to me too an angel descended,
And now on shining wings
Bear my spirit, free from all pain,
Towards heaven!

Stehe still!

German source: Mathilde Wesendonck

*Sausendes, brausendes Rad der Zeit,
Messer du der Ewigkeit;
Leuchtende Sphären im weiten All,
Die ihr umringt den Weltenball;
Urewige Schöpfung, halte doch ein,
Genug des Werdens, laß mich sein!*

*Halte an dich, zeugende Kraft,
Urgedanke, der ewig schafft!
Hemmet den Atem, stillt den Drang,
Schweiget nur eine Sekunde lang!
Schwellende Pulse, fesselt den Schlag;
Ende, des Wollens ew'ger Tag!
Daß in selig süßem Vergessen
Ich mög' alle Wonne ermessen!*

*Wenn Auge in Auge wonnig trinken,
Seele ganz in Seele versinken;
Wesen in Wesen sich wiederfindet,
Und alles Hoffens Ende sich kündigt,
Die Lippe verstummt in staundendem Schweigen,
Keinen Wunsch mehr will das Innre zeugen:
Erkennt der Mensch des Ew'gen Spur,
Und löst dein Rätsel, heil'ge Natur!*

Schmerzen

German source: Mathilde Wesendonck

*Sonne, weinest jeden Abend
Dir die Schönen Augen rot,
Wenn im Meeresspiegel badend
Dich erreicht der frühe Tod;*

*Doch erstehst in alter Pracht,
Glorie der düstren Welt,
Du am Morgen, neu erwacht,
Wie ein stolzer Siegesheld!*

*Ach, wie sollte ich da klagen,
Wie, mein Herz, so schwer dich sehn,
Muß die Sonne selbst verzagen,
Muß die Sonne untergehn?*

*Und gebieret Tod nur Leben,
Geben Schmerzen Wonnen nur:
O wie dank'ich daß gegeben
Solche Schmerzen mir Natur.*

Stand still!

Rushing, roaring wheel of time,
You that measure eternity;
Gleaming spheres in the vast universe,
You that surround our earthly sphere;
Eternaal creation - cease:
Enough of becoming, let me be!

Hold yourselves back, generative powers,
Primal Thought that always creates!
Stop your breath, still your urge,
Be silent for a single moment!
Swelling pulses, restrain your beating;
Eternal day of the Will - end!
That in blessed, sweet oblivion
I might measure all my bliss!

When eye gazes blissfully into eye,
When soul drowns utterly in soul;
When being finds itself in being,
And the goal of every hope is near,
When lips are mute in silent wonder,
When the soul wishes for nothing more:
Then man perceives Eternity's footprint,
And solves your riddle, holy Nature!

Agonies

Every evening, sun, you redden
Your lovely eyes with weeping,
When, bathing in the sea,
You die an early death;

Yet you rise in your old splendour,
The glory of the dark world,
When you wake in the morning
As a proud and conquering hero!

Ah, why should I complain,
Why should I see you, my heart, so depressed,
If the sun itself must despair,
If the sun itself must set?

If only death gives birth to life,
If only agony brings bliss:
O how I give thanks to Nature
For giving me such agony!

Lakmé (1883) – “Lakmé ton doux regard”

Lakmé by French composer, Léo Delibes, is set in British India in the late 19th century and inspired by Théodore Pavie's story, *Le babouches du Brahmane* (1849) and Louis Marie-Julien Viaud novel (Pierre Loti), *Le mariage du Loti* (1880). The score, written from 1881 to 1882, was first performed on April 14, 1883 by the Opéra-Comique. Loti was a poet, a musician and a captain from the French navy, and this can be easily reflected in Gérald's character from *Lakmé*. It is said that the story is in a way a series of true and fictional autobiographical events from the author's trip to Tahiti. And while the opera has fallen out of favor due to its themes of colonization and exhibits 19th-century orientalist attitudes it still remains one of Delibes most popular works.

In the opera, Nilakantha is a Brahmin Priest. His daughter, Lakmé, the heroine in the story has a divine nature, and when she sings the gods and most importantly Brahma can hear her. Nilakantha discovers that two soldiers have found his hidden sacred temple in the forest, where Lakmé was left alone. For Nilakantha, this act is more than sacrilegious, since he knows his daughter has been affected by the encounter and possibly fallen in love for one of the soldiers. In his aria, Nilakantha, disguised as a pennant *sannyasin*, persuades Lakmé to sing by convincing her that he wants to see her happy. But, in reality, the disguised, Nilakantha wants the intruder to recognize Lakmé and give himself away so Nilakantha can kill him.

Nilakantha

*Lakmé, ton doux regard se voile,
Ton sourire s'est attristé,
Comme on voit pâlir une étoile,
Une ombre assombrit la beauté.
C'est que Dieu de nous seretire,
C'est qu'il attend la mort du criminel.
Mais je veux retrouver ton sourire,
Oui, je veux retrouver ton sourire,
Et dans tes yeux, Et dan tex yeux
Je vuex revoir le ciel!*

*Le coeur rempli d'ardentes flèvres,
J'ai voulu t'écouter dormir!
Un rêve passait sur tes lèvres
Et je voyais ton front rougir.
C'est que Dieu de nous seretire,
C'est qu'il attend la mort du criminel.
Mais je veux retrouver ton sourire,
Oui, je veux retrouver ton sourire,
Et dans tes yeux, Et dan tex yeux
Je vuex revoir le ciel!*

Nilakantha

Lakmé, your sweet gaze is veiled,
Your smile has saddened,
As we see a star fade,
A shadow darkens the beauty.
It is because God withdraws from us,
It's because he's waiting for the criminal to die.
But I want to see your smile again,
Yes, I want to find your smile again,
And in your eyes, And in your eyes
I can see the sky again!

The heart filled with ardent fevers,
I wanted to listen to you sleep!
A dream passed your lips
And I saw your forehead blush.
It is because God withdraws from us,
It's because he's waiting for the criminal to die.
But I want to see your smile again,
Yes, I want to find your smile again,
And in your eyes, And in your eyes
I can see the sky again!

"Sous le dôme épais..." or the "Flower Duet"

"Sous le dôme épais," often called the "Flower Duet," is a beautiful piece composed by Léo Delibes for his Opera, Lakmé. In this duet, Lakmé, the daughter of a Brahmin priest, and her servant, Mallika, sing as they go to pick flowers by a river. The duet has become one of the most famous memorable operatic duets for soprano and mezzo-soprano voices and has been featured in advertisements (British Airways), films, and concerts.

Lakmé

*Viens, Mallika, les lianes en fleurs
Jettent dé-jà leur ombre
Sur le ruisseau sacré qui coule, calme et sombre,
Eveillé par le chant des oiseaux tapageurs!*

Mallika

*Oh! Maitrese, C'est l'heure ou je te vois sourire,
L'heure bénie où je puis lire dans
le coeur toujours fermé de Lakmé!*

DUET

*Sous le dôme épais
Où le blanc jasmin
À la rose s'assemble
Sur la rive en fleurs,
Riant au matin
Viens, descendons ensemble.
DouceMENT glissons de son flot charmant
Suivons le courant fuyant
Dans l'onde frémissante
D'une main nonchalante
Viens, gagnons le bord,
Où la source dort et
L'oiseau, l'oiseau chante.
Sous le dôme épais
Où le blanc jasmin,
Ah! descendons
Ensemble!*

Lakmé

*Mais, je ne sais quelle crainte subite
S'empare de moi,
Quand mon père va seul à leur ville maudite;
Je tremble, je tremble d'effroi!*

Mallika

*Pour que le Dieu Ganeça le protège,
Jusqu'à l'étang où s'ébattent Joyeux
Les cygnes aux ailes de neige,
Allons cueillir les lotus bleus.*

Lakmé

*Oui, près des cygnes aux ailes de neige,
Allons cueillir les lotus bleus*

REPEAT DUET

Lakmé

Come Mallika, the blooming vines
Already cast their shade
Over the sacred stream which runs calm and somber,
Wakened by the song of noisy birds!

Mallika

Oh, mistress, it is the hour, when I see you smiling,
The blessed hour when I can read
into the closed heart of Lakmé!

DUET

Under the thick dome
where the white jasmine
With the roses entwined together
On the river bank covered with flowers
laughing in the morning
Let us descend together!
Gently floating on its charming risings,
On the river's current
On the shining waves,
One hand reaches,
Reaches for the bank,
Where the spring sleeps,
And the bird, the bird sings.
Under the thick dome
where the white jasmine
Ah! calling us
Together!

Lakmé

But, I didn't not know what sudden fear
Takes a hold of me...
when my father goes alone to their cursed city;
I tremble, I tremble with fear.

Mallika

So that the god, Ganeça, may protect him
Let us go up to the pond where
the snowed-winged swans frolic happily
to gather the blue Lotus.

Lakmé

Yes, near the snow-winged swans
to gather the blue Lotus.

***Chérubin* (1905) – “Lorsque vous n’aurez rien”**

Chérubin is a rarely performed opera in three acts by Jules Massenet, with a French libretto by Francis de Croisset and Henri Cain, based on Croisset's play. It premiered at the Opéra de Monte-Carlo on February 14, 1905. The story is a humorous continuation of Beaumarchais' Figaro plays, taking place immediately after *The Marriage of Figaro* featuring a birthday celebration for Chérubin's, the young page of Count Almaviva. Nina, the Countess's maid, is secretly in love with Chérubin. When Chérubin arrives to the party, he greets the guest, and secretly slips a love letter to the Countess. When the Count discovers the secret love letter from the page to the Countess, he threatens to kill Chérubin. Nina saves the page's life by reciting all the verses of the love letter claiming that it was really written to her. True love is staring Chérubin in the face, but it will take another two acts before he realizes it.

Nina:

*Lorsque vous n'aurez rien à faire
Mandez-moi vite auprès de vous,
Le paradis que je préfère,
C'est un coussin à vos genoux.
Vous me remarquerez à peine,
Je me garderai de parler...
Et je retiendrai mon haleine
Si mon souffle peut vous troubler.*

*Afin que dans mon coeur morose
L'hiver fasse place au printemps,
Je demande bien peu de chose:
Un sourire de temps en temps...
Et si c'est trop... un regard même
Suffira pour me transformer.
Car sans rien dire je vous aime
Autant qu'un être peut aimer.*

Nina:

Reciting the love letter...

When you have nothing to do
Ask me quickly to you,
The paradise that I prefer,
It's a cushion for your knees.
You will hardly notice me,
I will refrain from speaking...
And I'll hold my breath
If my breath distrubs you.

So that in my gloomy heart
winter might give way to spring,
I ask very little:
A smile from time to time...
And if it's too much... even a look
Will be enough to transform me.
Because without saying anything I love you
As much as a human being can love.

***Cinco Canciones Negras* (1945)**

The influence of Cuban folk music on Xavier Montsalvatge's work is particularly striking, especially in his song cycle ***Cinco Canciones Negras***. Born in Girona, Spain, Montsalvatge spent many years studying at the Barcelona Conservatory. While his Catalan teachers had been drawn to the Germanic composers, Montsalvatge leaned toward the French style of Stravinsky and Milhaud. During the 1940s, while exploring the Costa Brava, he collected West Indian and Cuban folk songs leading him to discover remarkable parallels between Catalan and Cuban music. Though Montsalvatge was more interested in modern “art music” trends—coming close to abandoning tonality in his later works—he recognized the importance of his Spanish heritage and sought ways to incorporate it even during the censorship of Franco. Montsalvatge’s music throughout 1940s and 50s reflects not only the influence of Milhaud, who had also fallen under the spell of Afro-American music, but the rhythms of Cuban music.

The West Indian influence that surfaces in Montsalvatge’s *Tres divertimenti* of 1941 becomes particularly pronounced in his *Cinco canciones negras* of 1945–46, which became his most frequently performed songs. His *Canciones negras* began with “*Canción de cuña para dormir a un negrito*” on a text by Uruguayan poet Ildelfonso Pereda Valdés, which he intended as a single song for a recital by soprano Mercédes Plantada in mid-May 1945. After the rave response, he decided to make it into a collection, flanking the lullaby with two songs on texts by Nicolás Guillén, “*Chévere*” and “*Cante negro.*” He finally added settings of poems by Spanish friends Néstor Luján and Rafael Alberti to form a group of five. Plantada premiered the entire set to an enthusiastic reception on June 14, 1945. The success of the orchestrated version, presented to an audience of 6,000 just after Falla’s death in 1946, represented a passing of the nationalistic torch with Montsalvatge’s contributions significantly shaping the landscape of 20th-century Spanish music.

Cuba dentro de un piano
Spanish source: Rafael Alberti

*Cuando mi madre llevaba un sorbete de fresa por sombrero
y el humo de los barcos aún era humo de habanero.*

"Mulata vueltabajera..."

*Cádiz se adormecía entre fandangos y habaneras
y un lorito al piano quería hacer de tenor.*

"... dime dónde está la flor que el hombre tanto venera."

*Mi tío Antonio volvía con su aire de insurrecto.
La Cabaña y el Príncipe sonaban por los patios del Puerto.
(Ya no brilla la Perla azul del mar de las Antillas.
Ya se apagó, se nos ha muerto.)*

"Me encontré con la bella Trinidad ..."

*Cuba se había perdido y ahora era verdad.
Era verdad,
no era mentira.
Un cañonero huido llegó cantándolo en guajira.*

"La Habana ya se perdió. Tuvo la culpa el dinero ..."

*Calló,
cayó el cañonero.
Pero después, pero ¡ah! después
fue cuando al Sí
lo hicieron YES.*

Punto de Habañera
Spanish source: Néstor Luján

*La niña criolla pasa con su miriñaque blanco.
¡Qué blanco!
¡Hola! Crespón de tu espuma;
¡Marineros, contempladla!
Va mojadita de lunas
que le hacen su piel mulata;
Niña no te quejes,
tan solo por esta tarde.
Quisiera mandar al agua que no se escape de pronto
de la cárcel de tu falda.
Tu cuerpo encierra esta tarde
rumor de abrirse de dalia.
Niña no te quejes,
tu cuerpo de fruta está
dormido en fresco brocado.
Tu cintura vibra fina
con la nobleza de un látigo,
toda tu piel huele alegre
a limonal y naranjo.
Los marineros te miran
y se te quedan mirando.
La niña criolla pasa con su miriñaque blanco.
¡Qué blanco!*

Cuba in a piano
English translation: Richard Stokes

When my mother wore a strawberry ice for a hat
and the smoke from the boats was still Havana smoke.

"Mulata from Vuelta Abajo ..."

Cadiz was falling asleep to fandango and habanera
and a little parrot at the piano tried to sing tenor.

"... tell me, where is the flower that a man can really respect."

My uncle Anthony would come home in his rebellious way.
The Cabaña and El Príncipe resounded in the patios of the port.
(But the blue pearl of the Caribbean shines no more.
Extinguished. For us no more.)

"I met beautiful Trinidad ..."

Cuba was lost, this time it was true.
True
and not a lie.
A gunner on the run arrived, sang Cuban songs about it all.

"Havana was lost. And money was to blame ..."

The gunner went silent,
and fell.
But later, ah, later
they changed Sí
to YES.

Habanera Rhythm
English translation: Jacqueline Cockburn

The Creole girl goes by in her white crinoline.
How white!
The billowing spray of your crepe skirt!
Sailors, look at her!
She passes gleaming in the moonlight
which darkens her skin.
Young girl, do not complain,
only for tonight
do I wish the water not to suddenly escape
the prison of your skirt.
In your body this evening
dwells the sound of opening dahlias.
Young girl, do not complain,
your ripe body
sleeps in fresh brocade,
your waist quivers
as proud as a whip,
every inch of you skin is gloriously fragrant
with orange and lemon trees.
The sailors look at you
and feast their eyes on you.
The Creole girl goes by in her white crinoline.
How white!

Chévere

Spanish source: Nicolás Guillén

*Chévere del navajazo,
se vuelve él mismo navaja:
pica tajadas de luna,
mas la luna se le acaba;
pica tajadas de sombra,
mas la sombra se le acaba;
pica tajadas de canto,
mas el canto se le acaba;
y entonces pica que pica
carne de su negra mala.*

Canción de cuna para dormir un negrito

Spanish source: Ildefonso Pereda Valdés

Ninghe, ninghe, ninghe,
tan chiquitito,
el negrito
que no quiere dormir.

Cabeza de coco,
grano de café,
con lindas motitas,
con ojos grandotes
como dos ventanas
que miran al mar.

Cierra los ojitos,
negrito asustado;
el mandinga blanco
te puede comer.
¡Ya no eres esclavo!

Y si duermes mucho,
el señor de casa
promete comprar
traje con botones
para ser un 'groom'.

Ninghe, ninghe, ninghe,
duérmete, negrito,
cabeza de coco,
grano de café.

The Dandy (1996)

English translation: Richard Stokes

The dandy of the knife thrust
himself becomes a knife:
he cuts slices of the moon,
but the moon is fading on him;
he cuts slices of shadow,
but the shadow is fading on him,
he cuts slices of song,
but the song is fading on him;
and then he cuts up, cuts up
the flesh of his evil black woman.

Lullaby for a little black boy

English translation: Richard Stokes

Lullay, lullay, lullay,
tiny little child,
little black boy,
who won't go to sleep.

Head like a coconut,
head like a coffee bean,
with pretty freckles
and wide eyes
like two windows
looking out to sea.

Close your tiny eyes,
frightened little boy,
or the white devil
will eat you up.
You're no longer a slave!

And if you sleep soundly,
the master of the house
promises to buy
a suit with buttons
to make you a 'groom'.

Lullay, lullay, lullay,
sleep, little black boy,
head like a coconut,
head like a coffee bean.

Canto negro

Spanish source: Nicolás Guillén

*¡Yambambó, yambambé!
Repica el congo solongo,
repica el negro bien negro.
congo solongo del Songo
baila yambó sobre un pie.*

*Mamatomba,
serembé cuserembá,*

*El negro canta y se ajuma.
el negro se ajuma y canta.
el negro canta y se va.*

*Acuemem e serembó
aé,
yambó
aé.*

*Tamba, tamba, tamba, tamba,
tamba del negro que tumba,
tamba del negro, caramba,
caramba, que el negro tumba,
¡Yambá, yambó, yambambé!*

Negro Song

English translation: Jacqueline Cockburn

Yambambó, yambambé!
The congo solongo is ringing,
the black man, the real black man is ringing;
congo solongo from the Songo
is dancing the yambó on one foot.

Mamatomba,
Serembe cuserembá.

The black man sings and gets drunk,
the black man gets drunk and sings,
the black man sings and goes away.

Acuemem e serembó
aé,
yambó
aé.

Bam, bam, bam, bam,
bam of the black man who tumbles;
drum of the black man, wow,
wow, how the black man's tumbling!
¡Yambá, yambó, yambambé!

Translations by Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes published in the Spanish Song Companion (Gollancz, 1992)

Vanessa (1958) – “Must the Winter Come So Soon?”

"Must the winter come so soon?" is a brief aria from the opera *Vanessa*, Samuel Barber's Pulitzer Prize-winning opera about love, loss, and longing. With one of the most exquisite and sweepingly beautiful scores of the 20th century, the work—which *The Washington Post* once called “the finest American opera”—contains one of the most popular mezzo-soprano arias in the English-language opera repertoire. Though the soundscape on the surface is one of beauty, just underneath there are pulsing quarter notes that indicate the not-quickly-enough passing of time as well as Erika's youthful desire to explore beyond her small world. As Erika reflecting on her own inner thoughts, she ponders the onset of winter in the remote cabin where she lives. Unable to answer her own question, she contemplates the harsh and desolate season in her life quickly approaching.

*Must the winter come so soon?
Night after night I hear the hungry deer
wandering in the Woods,
And from his house of brittle bark
hoots the frozen owl.
Must the winter come so soon?
Here in this forest nether dawn nor sunset
marks the passing of the days.
It is a long winter here.
Must the winter come so soon?*

La Traviata (1853) – “Sempre Libera”

La Traviata by Giuseppe Verdi, with a libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, is based on Alexandre Dumas' play *La dame aux camélias*. It was first performed in Venice at the Teatro La Fenice in 1853. The first performance of the work was considered a failure, not because of the quality of the music itself, but because the singers were poorly prepared. Later, Verdi found a more suitable cast for the production, and the performance was warmly received. The opera soon became one of the composer's most popular works and has maintained this status into modern times. 'Sempre libera' ('Always Free'): an emotionally charged showcase sung by main character, Violetta, one of the most daunting heroine roles in the soprano repertoire. After the party, Violetta reflects on her life and wonders if she could be happy with Alfredo. However, she still decides that freedom is her way of life as she sings the famous scene and aria “Ah, forsè lui ... Sempre libera” (Ah, Perhaps he is the one... Always free).

Violetta:

È strano! È strano!
in core scolpiti ho quegli accenti!
Sarà per me sventura un serio amore?
Che risolvi, o turbata anima mia?
Null'uomo ancora t'accendeva.
Oh, gioia
ch'io non conobbi
esser amata amando!
E sdegnarla poss'io
per l'aride follie dei viver mio?

Ah, fors'è lui che l'anima
solinga ne' tumulti
godea sovente pingere
de' suoi colori occulti.
Lui, che modesto e vigilante
all'egre soglie ascese,
e nuova febbre accese
destandomi all'amor!
A quell'amor ch'è palpito
dell'universo intero
misterioso, altero
croce e delizia al cor.

Follie! Delirio vano è questo!
Povera donna, sola, abbandonata
in questo popoloso deserto
che appellano Parigi
che spero or'più?
Che far degg'io?
Gioire!
Di voluttà ne' vortici perir!
Gioir'!

Sempre libera degg'io
folleggiare di gioia in gioia,
vo' che scorra il viver mio
pei sentieri del piacer.
Nasca il giorno, o il giorno muoia,
sempre lieta ne' ritrovi,
a diletta sempre nuovi
dee volare il mio pensier

Violetta:

How strange! How strange!
I have these words engraved in my heart!
Would a serious love be a misfortune for me?
What's your decision, oh troubled soul of mine?
No man has set you on fire before
Oh what joy
I didn't know
being loved, loving!
And could I reject it
out of the barren insanity of my living?

Ah, maybe he's the one who
often rejoiced painting my soul
alone amid excitements
with his occult colours
How modest and vigilant he
climbed the sad doorsteps
and lit up a new fever
arousing my love!
Such a love that makes
the whole universe palpitate
mysterious and lofty
crucifixion and delight for my heart

Madness! This is a futile delirium!
Poor woman, alone, abandoned
in this crowded desert
that's called Paris
what do I hope for now on?
What must I do?
Have fun!
Perish in the vortices of pleasure!
Have fun!

Free and aimless I frolic
From joy to joy,
Flowing along the surface
of life's path as I please.
As the day is born,
Or as the day dies,
Happily I turn to the new delights
That make my spirit soar.

Alfredo:

Amor è palpito dell'universo intero,
misterioso, altero,
croce e delizia al cor.

Violetta:

Oh! Oh! Amore!
Follie! Gioir!

Alfredo:

Love is a heartbeat throughout the universe,
mysterious, altering,
the torment and delight of my heart.

Violetta:

Oh! Oh! Love!
Madness! Euphoria!