



Composer's update

Ottawa composer Andrew Ager is pleased to announce his collaboration with colleagues south of the border continues. Plans are now in place for him to write "Gatsby", an opera of F. Scott Fitzgerald's iconic American novel "The Great Gatsby", to be premiered in May 2023 by Vermont's Barn Opera.

This venue is only a few hours' drive south of Ottawa, so anyone interested in at-

tending from our nation's capital will have no problem going there.

As well, Ager is writing a one-hour opera called "Жена сталина" - "The Wife of Stalin", in cooperation with Toronto librettist Alexey Alexeev. This opera narrates the tragic fate of Nadezhda Alliluyeva, the brilliant wife of Joseph Stalin, who took her own life in 1932 at the age of thirty-one.



Andrew Ager

Nadezhda Alliluyeva

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Message from the President

Dear NCOS Members:

It seems that we are moving towards the end of the pandemic. I know we are all impatient to meet face-to-face, while at the same time we need to be cautious as we open up.

To that end, I would like to hear from each of you either via phone (613-852-3524) or email (smark.robinson@yahoo.ca) with your thoughts as to when you would feel comfortable attending an Opera alla Pasta or a High C & High T. Also, what precautions/changes do you think we need to put in place? Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with the Board and me.

We continue to connect through Zoom and through our Newsletter. I am grateful to all those who make contributions. Please consider making a contribution to a Zoom and/or our Newsletter.

I am planning on having a Pot Luck Zoom. If you would like to present an Opera excerpt, please let me know.

Stay well. Stay safe.

Thank you,

Mark Robinson

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***The Day You Were Born - A World Premiere Zoom Event* by Lesley Robinson**



Those who attended the June 27th NCOS Zoom event were privileged to enjoy a special treat—we were the first to see video extracts of a brand-new opera composed by Jack Hui Litster. Not even the singers had yet seen the results of their work. We were happy to welcome two special guests to the event—baritone and Founding Artistic Director of OperOttawa, Norman E. Brown and composer Jack Hui Litster.

Canadian baritone Norman E. Brown has been widely praised for his rich vocal colour and impressive repertoire. He is known to Ottawa audiences for his performances for Pellegrini Opera in *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Roméo et Juliette*. He has sung at the NAC, Opera Lyra, many other places in Canada as well as Italy, Bulgaria and Japan. Norman's other artistic career is in artistic management. He was General manager at Opera Lyra in the 90s and is the founding Artistic Director of OperOttawa. Productions include *Acis and Galatea* (2014), a 2015 opera gala, *Giulio Cesare* (2016) and *Dido and Aeneas* (2017).

Our second special guest was Jack Hui Litster. Jack is a musician, composer, producer and educator, based in Ottawa. He teaches music at Carleton University. He plays percussion, keyboard, guitar and is studying guzheng—a Chinese plucked zither. Jack is actively involved in non-profit organizations and is on the Board of ArtsConnect. In March of this year OperOttawa announced Jack as Composer in Residence for three years. In each of the three years he will compose one operatic work to be produced and performed by OperOttawa. At June's NCOS Zoom Meeting we were excited to hear excerpts from Jack's first Opera, *The Day You Were Born*.



Norman has enjoyed a connection to opera in Ottawa since the 70s. He used to come to the Summer Festival, then Opera Lyra brought him to Ottawa in 1993. OperOttawa fills a gap in Ottawa. Specialising in early baroque and oratorios, it gives young singers the opportunity to learn full roles and for chorus members to understudy and thus learn complete roles. COVID cancelled everything the company was working on other than *The Day You Were Born*. Norman introduced two singers who who sang in *The Day You Were Born* and joined us on the Zoom, Erinne-Colleen Laurin and Carole Portelance.

The opera is a story about a family and fittingly, thanks to the pandemic, it was recorded in the singers' family homes. It is the story of a young couple and the birth of their first child. For composer Jack Hui Litster, witnessing the birth of his own children was a life-changing experience. In his research for the libretto, he interviewed a lot of people—mums, dads, midwives and had the help of an excellent script consultant. The story is set in the Orkney Islands, Scotland at the beginning of the twentieth century. At that time many people were leaving the island communities to find work. Life was hard. The story is of Robert, his wife Isla, who is a midwife and their daughter Poppy. We see all three characters at different times in their lives. Erinne-Colleen Laurin is the young Isla and Colin Frotten sings the young Robert, with Maria Delaney as the young Poppy. The older characters are sung by Carole Portelance, Norman E. Brown and Rebecca Taylor. Frédéric Lacroix was the pianist in the video and Jack himself appears, playing percussion and creating orchestration. Some messages of the opera are that we should appreciate the wisdom of children, that birth is an everyday miracle and that each time a child is born, the world is new again.

We were privileged to see the video of the overture and some scenes from Act 1 as well as Act 2 in its entirety. In the first scene, the older Robert and Isla reflect back with their daughter Poppy on her birth. In the second scene, the young Robert talks about everyone leaving the island and looks ahead to becoming a father. Young Isla is full of the joy of being pregnant and bringing new life. She anticipates being there for her baby. In another scene there is a duet between the older Robert and Isla looking back with pride and joy. The birth scene itself comes at the end of Act 1. It is very intense and is

The Day You Were Born - A World Premiere Zoom Event (continued)

not yet ready to be shared. This has been the largest project Jack has ever worked on and it has been in his head for many months. Over the last six weeks, talented singers, all lovely people, have brought it to life.

In Act 2 the older Isla reflects back on the birth of her daughter in a moving aria entitled “More than just me”. There are a number of poignant moments. It was beautiful to hear the children’s voices in the chorus and we heard the younger and older versions of the characters all singing together with the chorus. Hearing the older and younger Robert and Isla singing together was a reminder of how we all have the germ of our whole lives within us.

For the creation of the video the singers did a lot of work. Firstly, they had to learn their parts. They each sang alone to a piano track and found appropriate spaces to sing. They all sent their individual recordings to Jack who worked on editing the audio first, then using software to edit and sync the video. Some singers had not even met each other, yet 20 singers sang remotely and everything was aligned for them to come together virtually.

The younger Robert and Isla were cast as tenor and soprano, whilst their older counterparts were mezzo/alto and baritone. Erinne-Colleen Laurin sang the younger Isla. She told us that this was the first time she had heard her voice together with the others. Working alone, it had taken a lot of time and re-doing to get it all in one take. Now hearing it put together, she was very touched and had tears in her eyes. Carole Portelance (who gave voice to the older Isla) said that she was incredibly moved to see everyone together. It was a great challenge from a singer’s perspective, having to work at home and find the right setting and lighting. Carole thanked Norman and Jack for the wonderful gift of creating the opera.

Jack talked about his idea of combining the younger and more mature versions of the same characters. He said that he had always had “what if” thoughts about what it would be like for his 15-year-old self to meet his current self and his older self. What might they say to each other? The birth sequence is an example of this “what if” thinking. It is a long labour and such an intense experience. The older Isla arrives and coaches her younger self through the experience.

Jack also explained his choice of time and place for the story. The characters and plot came first and he decided that he didn’t want it to be a modern setting. His parents were from England, so he wanted to set it somewhere in the British Isles. He picked a small island and researched the location and history. After making that decision he met a student from Orkney who put him in touch with musicians and historians there. Thanks to everyone, it all came together.

Jack’s next opera is not yet in the works. He wants to finish this one first! Meanwhile, OperOttawa has plans to bring back some of their cancelled projects, for example *Acis and Galatea* by Handel and Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*. Another project in the works is Handel’s *Alcina* and OperOttawa also has plans for an alternative version of Handel’s *Messiah*. The company is looking for support from the community and hopes to incorporate a chamber orchestra into performances.

It was marvellous to be exposed to beautiful, new opera. NCOS Board and members thank Norman E. Brown and Jack Hui Litster for a wonderful afternoon and wish them and OperOttawa all the best in their future endeavours.

In the event that you might like to provide some support to OperOttawa, here is how you could make a donation. Even a small donation would be appreciated.

Donations can be made through cheques (made out to Norman Brown) or through an e-transfer to [norman e brown@rogers.com](mailto:norman_e_brown@rogers.com)

Please send cheques to: Norman Brown, 1906-518 Rochester Street, Ottawa ON K1S 5W4

Thank you.

OperOttawa's 2021-2022 Season

OPEROTTAWA presents

Acis & Galatea

an opera by George Frederic Handel



Erinne-Colleen
Laurin
Galatea



Alexander
Cappellazzo
Acis



Iain Macpherson
Damon



Norman E. Brown
Polyphemus



Frédéric
Lacroix
Piano



Gerard
Nieuwenhuis
Recorder

Sunday November 14, 2021 @ 2:30 pm

First Baptist Church (Laurier & Elgin)

Tickets \$35 (available from cast members only)
audience limited to 50

Covid-safe seating and precautions in place

WE ARE BACK! Re-entry live show

OperOttawa presents **MESSIAH** by G.F. Handel

The Alternative Version
with

A rarely performed chorus
and aria switches between voices

**Sunday April 3, 2022
at 2:30 pm**

First Baptist Church

Tickets \$35

OperOttawa presents **WHAT IS LOVE?**

A world premiere opera
by Jack Hui Litster

Libretto from
the Love Writings of
Kahlil Gibran

**Sunday May 15, 2022
at 2:30 pm**

First Baptist Church

Tickets \$35

Plan ahead
Mark your
calendars

For more information: contact
norman_e_brown@rogers.com

When the Tenor Doesn't Get the Girl - An NCOS Zoom event

Lesley Robinson

We are all familiar with the romantic pairing of the tenor and soprano in leading roles and when they don't end up together, it's usually because of a tragic ending where one of them (such as in *La bohème* or *La traviata*) or even both of them (as in *Tosca* or *Aida*) die, but it is much rarer for the tenor not to get the girl at all. There are a number of circumstances in which this happens. Rarely, the tenor might lose out to an unusually dashing baritone. Sometimes it's just a matter of timing—they meet when it's too late and she is already promised to someone else. Another peculiarly operatic circumstance is when the leading “man” is actually played by a woman. Perhaps roles were written with particular singers in mind, or perhaps it was a matter of what voice types were available at the time. We'll take a look at some examples of these circumstances.



So when does the tenor lose out to a dashing baritone? Let's start with something familiar. *Carmen* is an example of this. Yes, Don Jose is a leading role, but he is an incredibly wimpy character and it's hardly surprising that Carmen swiftly loses interest in him and is much more attracted to the debonair and glamorous Escamillo, the narcissistic, macho local celebrity. Don Jose is worse than wimpy. The best thing you can say about him is that he loves his mother, but he is otherwise morally bankrupt. It is one thing allowing an attractive woman to escape from arrest, but joining a criminal gang of smugglers, just to be near her, is another thing entirely. Back to Escamillo. We watched a man who can be manly in pink in an extract from Barrie Kosky's 2016 Royal Opera House Covent Garden production. This production was broadcast free in

2019 around the world live on Facebook and YouTube as well as on big screens in squares and public parks around the UK. Lithuanian bass-baritone Kostas Smoriginas is Escamillo, accompanied by some hilarious, over-the-top back-up dancers. Who wouldn't love this guy?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vr8sc4EjsTQ>



And now for something completely different... *Werther*. An example in another famous French opera of a leading tenor who doesn't get the girl is Massenet's *Werther*. As the title role, Werther himself is the focus of all our interest, yet he is powerless to get the girl. Unfortunately for him, Charlotte is captive of her promise to her dying mother to marry the suitor of her parents' choice and once she has committed herself to the boring Albert, she feels helpless to break her pledge. Although Albert doesn't win her love, he *does* secure her obligation to him. Each time that she meets Werther, she is on the brink of yielding to him. The best example is in Act 3 when

he recites a poem in the climactic aria “Pourquoi me réveiller?” He knows that she loves him, yet she cannot give herself to him and he remains in despair. These are the most passion-charged moments between them. Roberta Alagna as Werther and Kate Aldrich as Charlotte display some great singing and acting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvM5beFesOw>



In *Götterdämmerung*, the fourth and final episode of Wagner's *Ring*, Siegfried starts off with the girl (his beloved Brünnhilde), but loses her to baritone Gunther by trickery. Under the influence of a magic potion, he forgets Brünnhilde and falls in love with the somewhat unpleasant Gutrune. He then sets off to win Brünnhilde for Gutrune's odious brother (and Siegfried's new blood-brother) Gunther. It's all rather unlikely, but leads to Siegfried's eventual death. Here are Gunther, Brünnhilde and the even more odious

Hagen (son of Alberich the dwarf, the original thief of the gold, from which the accursed Ring is forged) plotting to kill Siegfried at the end of Act 2. The selected extract is from a 1991-2 production at Bayreuth, conducted by Daniel Barenboim with Bobo Brinkmann as Gunther, Philip Kang as Hagen and Anne Evans as Brünnhilde. You can watch an excerpt on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5XM-RTQvV8>



In Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, Canio, the tenor is married, but his wife Nedda is in love with the baritone Silvio. Tortured by jealousy, Canio consummates the tragedy by killing both of them in the climax of Act 2 in which there is a startling blurring of fiction and reality, with Nedda aspiring vainly to keep to the script of the play-within-a-play and Canio veering into his own tormented tragedy. It is not until the very end that the audience realizes that what they are watching is real. "La commedia è finita!!" Franco

Zeffirelli's 1982 film version contains one of Plácido Domingo's finest recorded moments—the famous "tears of a clown" moment from the end of Act 1. Here is a rough translation of what he is singing:

Put on your costume and your make up. The people have paid their money and now they want to have a laugh. And if Arlecchino steals Colombina from you, laugh, Pagliaccio ...and everyone will applaud! Turn your pain and sorrow into laughter. Grimace through your sobs and your grief. Laugh, clown, at your broken love, laugh at the pain which poisons your heart!

The full film is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSURBaT3XF4>



Now let's look at an example of when the tenor doesn't get the girl because the leading man is played by a woman! Rossini's *La donna del lago* is a wonderful example of this. There are actually two tenors, Uberto (King James V of Scotland in disguise) and Rodrigo, a highland warrior chieftain, vying for Elena's affections, but she remains steadfastly loyal to her beloved Malcolm, sung by a mezzo-soprano (which unusually is not a "trouser" role, but a kilt role.)

My favourite scene is the one which I think of as the duelling tenors trying to stake their claim and expressing their natural enmity. The quality of the singing in the Met's 2015 production was phenomenal. The duelling tenors are Juan Diego Florez and John Osborn and the object of their affections is sung by Joyce DiDonato. A brief extract is available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdZPWihfnzo&list=PLc6ZDeDSaSBJKfPckIACoMeat_9a4I54p&index=135

In Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (The Capulets and the Montagues), The tenor role is that of Tebaldo (Tybalt), but in this version of the story (which is different from Shakespeare's), he is not Juliet's cousin, but is betrothed to her; but of course, Juliet loves Romeo who is sung by a woman. The rivals clash in a magnificent 2005 outdoor production from the Palazzo Ducale at Martina Franca in Italy (which is way down south, right at the top of the heel of the boot). Romeo is sung by Sicilian soprano Clara Polito and Tebaldo by Italian tenor Danilo Formaggio. Tebaldo finds Romeo alone and they sing an angry duet. As they are about to fight, they hear a funeral procession. They stop to listen and realise that it is Giulietta's funeral. The rivals are united in grief, each wanting to die as they continue to fight.

This scene is available on YouTube from another production with Joyce DiDonato as Romeo and Benjamin Bernheim as Tebaldo.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USKZZA8MmQA>



In Rossini's *Semiramide*, Idreno (tenor) loves the Princess Azema (soprano), but she is in love with Arsace (contralto) who loves her, although she has been promised to someone else. The tenor in this opera is really superfluous to requirements as far as the story is concerned.

He does have some lovely music, but one wonders what he is even doing there at all. During the baroque period, both composers and singers were constantly upping their game, so that the boundaries of virtuoso vocalism were continually being stretched. Composers expected that singers would always seek to "improve" on the notes on the page and this led to vocal gymnastics in singers' upper ranges. In the 18th century it was the castrati who pushed this kind of virtuosity to incredible limits, but later this happened for both sopranos and tenors too and the tenor voice in particular was pressed to extremely high singing. So much so, that composers rarely notated the highest possible notes and left ornamentation to the discretion of individual singers; the bel canto specialists do that to this day. The part of Idreno was sung at the premiere by John Sinclair, a Scottish tenor who was a brilliant exemplar of this style of singing. Perhaps Rossini only included this role to give Sinclair an opportunity to show off. Javier Camarena showed off to perfection, pouring his heart out to Azema in the 2018 Met production.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqQTposCx1c>

In Tchaikovsky's *Yevgény Onégin*, the tenor is a friend and sidekick of the title character. He's a poet and fiancé of Olga, younger sister of the heroine Tatyana. It is he who introduces Onegin to the household. He comes to a sad end—consumed with jealousy when Onegin dances with Olga, he rashly challenges him to a duel, which neither of them has the courage to abandon. Instead of getting the girl, poor Lensky is shot and killed by his supposed friend. There is a beautiful atmospheric 1988 film version, filmed on location and directed by Petr Weigl. Non-singing actors play the roles, with the singing parts recorded separately. Lensky is sung by Welsh tenor Stuart Burrows and Onegin by Austrian

baritone Bernd Weikl and the music is supplied by the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, conducted by Sir Georg Solti. The extract chosen was the moving scene that precedes the actual duel.

On YouTube you can see Slovakian tenor Pavol Breslik as Lensky in the 2015 Covent Garden production (alongside Simon Keenlyside), lamenting on life and love:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYgT89paO1Q>



When I was putting together a list of my favourite tenor arias, I realised that many of those that I particularly love are rarely performed by the top notch singers, except in concert or perhaps on CD and the only reason I had become familiar with some of them was my obsessive YouTube searches for as much JDF as I could find. The plain fact is that when the tenor part is not the leading role, the top guys just aren't interested in doing it and no one would ask them to do it anyway. It makes more sense to give the role to an up-and-coming (and less expensive) young artist, so some of these roles are simply going to be less well known than others. I'd like to end with a wonderful exception to this which we were lucky enough to enjoy live. It's a long story, but I'll just say that this was on the first full weekend that we spent watching three operas at the Met back in

1982. We had tickets for *Der Rosenkavalier* in which there is no tenor to get the girl. There is however, a very small tenor part—the Italian singer who comes to perform in a bustling reception room and although his song is beautiful, he is more or less completely ignored by everyone present. The Italian Singer we saw on that occasion was none other than Luciano Pavarotti (playing himself!) and the Marschallin was Kiri Te Kanawa.

It is available on YouTube. (Apologies for the quality.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-UQt5HXWnQ>

New Season, New Plans by Lesley Robinson

In March 2020, opera houses all over the world, suddenly found themselves having to close, with no idea of if and when things would get back to normal. They scrambled to find ways to deliver programmes to their subscribers and to audiences around the world. Thank goodness for the internet. After a cancelled 2020/21 season, there is light at the end of the tunnel and houses have been making plans for 2021/22. Here's a selection of what is on offer within fairly easy reach of Ottawa.

Opéra de Montréal is offering an abbreviated season, beginning at the end of January with a production of *La Traviata*, starring Quebec soprano Marie-Josée Lord. Set in the Paris of the Roaring Twenties, the production evokes the world of the iconic Josephine Baker. March will see the presentation of a new work, *La beauté du monde* composed by Julien Bilodeau, with a libretto by Michel Marc Bouchard (whose work *Les féluettes* premiered to great acclaim at OdM in 2016.) Set in World War II Paris, the opera tells the story of the rescue of major artworks from the Louvre to prevent their plunder by the Nazis. The cast is headed by Philippe Sly and Julie Boulianne. The long-awaited Barrie Kosky production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* will be onstage in May 2022 with an international cast. Through projections, the imaginative set evokes the era of silent films. Quebec theatres require the COVID-19 Vaccination Passport.

The Canadian Opera Company plans its return to the stage in Toronto with live, in-person performances beginning in February with *Madama Butterfly*. In April and May COC will present its own productions of *La Traviata* and *The Magic Flute*. It is unfortunate that with such a limited season, both Montreal and Toronto have chosen to stage two of the same operas. In addition to the live onstage performances, COC is offering a free digital membership to enjoy especially-produced concerts and performances from the stage of the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts beginning this Fall. Events planned include Russell Braun and Tamara Wilson in concert, Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Mozart's *Requiem*. The COC adheres to the Ontario Public Health guidelines. In accordance with the provincial mandate, all audiences must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to attend a performance. Masks will be required at all times indoors except when eating and drinking. It is hoped the opera house will be able to operate at full capacity by February 2022 when in-person performances resume.

The Metropolitan Opera in New York begins its season on October 1st with a historic debut of its first ever presentation of an opera by a black composer—*Fire Shut Up in My Bones* by Grammy Award-winning jazz musician and composer Terence Blanchard. The opera, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, tells the story of a young man's journey to overcome trauma. Baritone Will Liverman stars as Charles, alongside sopranos Angel Blue and Latonia Moore. The 2021/22 season has a full programme planned with many returning favourites and some new productions including new stagings of Verdi's *Rigoletto* and *Don Carlos*, Matthew Aucoin's *Euridyce*, Brett Dean's *Hamlet* and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. As of the time of writing, the land border is not yet open to non-essential travel by Canadians. The Met requires all audience members to provide proof of full vaccination against Covid-19. A full programme of ten Live in HD presentations is planned for cinemas this season, beginning with *Boris Godunov* on October 9th.

Following a "virtual" only season in 2020, the Glimmerglass Festival was back in 2021 with "Glimmerglass on the Grass", a season of outdoor performances, although with the land border closed, it was not possible for Canadian patrons to attend. Plans for 2022 have not yet been announced, but should be coming soon.

Opera Atelier in Toronto has announced its 2021/22 season entitled "Wings of Desire". Everything planned by Atelier is in strict compliance with provincial health and safety regulations. A fully-staged and filmed production of *Angel* by Edwin Huizinga will be streamed from Thursday, October 28 at 7pm and will be available until November 12th. *Angel* will feature soprano Measha Brueggergosman, tenor Colin Ainsworth, soprano Mireille Asselin, baritone Jesse Blumberg, soprano Meghan Lindsay, baritone John Tibbetts and bass-baritone Douglas Williams.

Companies have found inventive ways to bring works to the public. Some are reopening live on stage, whereas others continue to provide virtual content for those who are not yet ready to return to the opera house. Their willingness to be flexible and innovative is a credit to their creativity.

Just for Fun - Top Ten Opera Villains by Lesley Robinson

Opera is dramatic to the core, so the presence of villains is de rigueur. There can even be villains in comic operas, for example Dr. Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville*, but the worst of the worst tend to lurk in dramas and melodramas.

10 The Duke of Mantua in Verdi's *Rigoletto* is a dastardly figure. He seduces a pure young girl just because he can, with no thought to the misery he causes her. Despite his despicable callousness, Gilda gives her life to save his. He displays his true colours in the famous third act quartet. You can watch it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/BMwDbH3m9xc>. This is a 2016 version from the Vienna State Opera with Juan Diego Flórez as the Duke, Nadia Krasteva as Maddalena, Carlos Alvarez as Rigoletto and Olga Peretyatko as Gilda.



9 Turandot is not a classic villain. After all, she is the object of the hero's love and she ends up giving in to him. Nevertheless, she starts out demonstrating immense cruelty, taking revenge on all men for a historical offence on an ancestor. Not only does she reject ardent suitors, but she has them beheaded. As she claims in her third riddle for Calaf, she is cold as ice, yet she is fiery. Here are Ghena Dimitrova and Nicola Martinucci in the riddle scene from the Arena di Verona: <https://youtu.be/NR-rAY7h3Pg>.



8 Don Giovanni is another ambiguous villain. He is callous and dastardly, not giving a jot for the trail of broken hearts he leaves behind him (1003 in Spain!) Despite his indisputable charm, he gets his comeuppance, descending to hell in the final scene. Here is that scene from a Glyndebourne production with Gilles Cachemaille as Don Giovanni, Steven Page as Leporello and Gudjon Oskarsson as Il Commendatore: <https://youtu.be/5P566eqNF9w>.



7 The Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* is an interesting villain. She presents herself as good and sends Tamino off on his quest to rescue her daughter, but it becomes clear later that it is the Queen who is the villain of the story and is finally vanquished. Diana Damrau is a fabulous Queen of the Night in this Royal Opera House version: <https://youtu.be/YuBeBjqKSGQ>



6 Despite its fanciful atmosphere, Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman* is a dark story. The four manipulative villains are evil incarnate. Thomas Hampson made a nasty four villains at the Royal Opera House with Sonya Yoncheva. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-uZ19hTvdK>



Just for Fun - Top Ten Opera Villains (continued)

5 Iago in Verdi's *Otello* is a complex character, perhaps the least cardboard cutout villain of all. A trusted advisor of Otello, he has been passed over for promotion. He plots and manipulates his way in a thirst for revenge. Tito Gobbi sang a mean Iago: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SWYKIN41WQ>.



4 Mr. And Mrs. Macbeth, from another of Verdi's Shakespearean operas, make a villainous duo. They start out spurred by ambition and the lure of power, but quickly spiral into guilt and mania. Željko Lučić' and Anna Netrebko made a great fervent and frenzied pair at the ROH in 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hlf1enU4wI>.



3 Villains are plentiful in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Alberich the dwarf is the one who sets everything in motion by stealing the gold from the Rheinmaidens and forging the all-powerful ring from it. He foregoes love in order to possess it and it is Alberich who curses the ring, triggering the degeneration that is to come. Hermann Brecht sang the role of Alberich in the centennial *Ring* in Bayreuth in 1980: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWyJaeKcQXY>.



2 Any list of villains has to include Méphistophélès, the agent of the Devil who makes a deal with Faust at the price of his soul. Erwin Schrott sang the role of Méphistophélès in the Royal Opera House's online streamed production of Gounod's *Faust* in July 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzCxoMbmZfA>.



1 The worst of the worst, the ultimate operatic villain has to be Baron Scarpia, the evil, sneering, narcissistic and brutal chief of police in Puccini's *Tosca*. There is a great You Tube video of Gerald Finley talking about the role: <https://youtu.be/cvougsEs81k>.

