ROYAL OPERA

MUSIC DIRECTOR **SIR ANTONIO PAPPANO**
DIRECTOR OF OPERA **OLIVER MEARS**

LA FORZA DEL DESTINO

OPERA IN FOUR ACTS (MILAN VERSION)

MUSIC **GIUSEPPE VERDI**
LIBRETTO **FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE** AFTER ÁNGEL PÉREZ DE SAAVEDRA, DUKE OF RIVAS'S DON ÁLVARO O LA FUERZA DEL SINO WITH A SCENE FROM FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER'S WALLENSTEINS LAGER, WITH ADDITIONAL TEXT (1869) BY **ANTONIO GHISLANZONI**

CONDUCTOR **MARK ELDER**

DIRECTOR **CHRISTOF LOY**
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR **GEORG ZLABINGER**
DESIGNER **CHRISTIAN SCHMIDT**
LIGHTING DESIGNER **OLAF WINTER**
CHOREOGRAPHER **OTTO PICHLER**
REVIVAL CHOREOGRAPHER **KLEVIS ELMAZAJ**
DRAMATURG **KLAUS BERTISCH**

ROYAL OPERA CHORUS
CHORUS DIRECTOR **WILLIAM SPAULDING**

ORCHESTRA OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE
CONCERT MASTER **SERGEY LEVITIN**

19 | 24 MATINEE | 27 SEPTEMBER | 2 | 6 | 9 OCTOBER 2023

Co-production with DUTCH NATIONAL OPERA

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Organ
HENRY WEBSDALE

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WELCOME

Verdi's love of Shakespeare is reflected and refracted throughout his operas, and not only in his three 'Shakespeare' works. *La forza del destino* is a typical example. It embodies the quintessentially Shakespearean juxtapositions of high tragedy and low comedy, an unruly and often wayward approach to time and place, and even the complexity of editions so familiar to lovers of the English playwright. But it is in the primacy of dramatic situation that Verdi most truly follows Shakespeare: the extreme predicaments of his characters, and the violent conflicts between them, are the very stuff of drama.

Christof Loy's production grounds this sprawling piece in a unitary sense of place and home, embracing the Spain and Italy of the 20th century, including the work of Spanish and Italian filmmakers. Mark Elder conducts a superb cast, including Sondra Radvanovsky, Brian Jagde and Etienne Dupuis and Aleksei Isaev.

We are grateful to The Royal Opera House Principals Julia and Hans Rausing and The Foyle Foundation for their generous support of this revival.

Oliver Mears, Director of Opera*
Antonio Pappano, Music Director of The Royal Opera**

*Position generously supported by SIR MICK AND LADY BARBARA DAVIS
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La forza del destino © 2019 ROH. Photographed by Bill Cooper

CAST

MARQUIS OF CALATRAVA
JAMES CRESWELL

DONNA LEONORA
SONDRA RADVANOVSKY

CURRA
CHANÁE CURTIS

DON ALVARO
BRIAN JAGDE

ALCALDE
THOMAS D HOPKINSON

DON CARLO DI VARGAS
ETIENNE DUPUIS
(19 | 24 MAT SEP | 2 | 6 | 9 OCT)
ALEKSEI ISAEV
(27 SEP)

MASTRO TRABUCO
CARLO BOSI

PREZIOSILLA
VASILISA BERZHANSKAYA

PADRE GUARDIANO
EVGENY STAVINSKY

FRA MELITONE
RODION POGOSSOV

SURGEON
DAWID KIMBERG

Please refer to the digital cast sheet for details of all actors, extra chorus and children

SYNOPSIS

The Marquis of Calatrava lost his youngest son at an early age, a loss followed soon afterwards by that of his wife, a woman he loved above all others. Two children remain: his elder son Carlo and his daughter Leonora, who as a child lived in a world of her own. In this world her love of her father was no less intense than her love of the Virgin Mary, whom she regarded as her protector. But as she grew up, she was drawn to a world in which she was less protected. Now she has gotten to know Don Alvaro, the son of a Spanish grandee and an Inca princess. Alvaro was born in prison and as a man of mixed race soon learnt what it was like to be rejected and persecuted. The Marquis tries to prevent the burgeoning love between Alvaro and his daughter, ensuring that his home is well guarded.

ACT I: NEAR SEVILLE AT NIGHT

Don Alvaro has decided to abduct Leonora from her father's house. Arrangements for her flight have been made with the help of Curra, one of her servants, and the latter's son, both of whom are keen to join her in her escape. Everything goes according to plan: the Marquis retires for the night and Don Alvaro finally appears. Alvaro has not only planned their whole escape but has agreed to Leonora's demand that they be married by a priest before dawn. Her honour means everything to him. And yet Leonora hesitates. She loves her father and wants to postpone their flight. Ultimately, however, her desire for Alvaro triumphs over her feelings as a daughter. Just as the couple are about to leave, they are surprised by Leonora's father, who insults Alvaro by referring to his mixed-race background. It is only with difficulty that Alvaro is able to control himself. He assures the Marquis that Leonora's honour is inviolate and declares his willingness to face the legal consequences of his planned abduction. In token of his readiness, he throws down his pistol, but the weapon accidentally discharges, fatally wounding the Marquis. With his dying breath, the Marquis curses his daughter. Alvaro and Leonora flee.

ACT II

SCENE 1: A YEAR LATER – RUSTIC CELEBRATIONS IN THE VICINITY OF CÓRDOBA

The circumstances surrounding their disastrous attempt to elope have forced Alvaro and Leonora to flee in different directions. Leonora has lost all trace of Alvaro and is now wandering through Spain in an attempt to evade her brother Carlo, who has sworn to exact bloody vengeance.

The whole of Spain is in turmoil. Italy is at war with Germany, and Spain is expected to support the Italians. For the present the dangers of war still seem remote, but whenever people meet to sing and dance, there is still a sense of living on the edge. Are they just mocking the situation or are they genuinely seduced by this madness when Preziosilla, a smuggler with a penchant for political songs, exclaims 'War is beautiful, long live war'? She high-spiritedly promises to accompany the volunteers to the battle front in Italy.

Leonora has stumbled into a world for which she was never prepared. Among the revellers is her brother, who has concealed his true identity and is travelling around as a student. When she sees him, she is seized by panic and prays to God to preserve her from her brother's revenge. Carlo entertains the company with a sombre ballad about the death of the Marquis, and the refugee lovers. It appears from this that Alvaro has returned home to Latin America.

SCENE 2: SHORTLY AFTERWARDS – THE MONASTERY CLOSE TO THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS

Leonora has heard about an anchorite's cell close to a monastery where a woman who had been unhappy in love had eked out her pitiful life many years earlier. It is here that she herself now hopes to find refuge. She tells Padre Guardiano (the Father Superior) that her name is Leonora di Vargas. In no uncertain terms he draws her attention to the consequences of her actions but finally yields to her entreaty that she be allowed to stay. From now on she will never again have contact with any living soul. Leonora feels reconciled with Heaven and believes that she will be able to forget the terrifying images of her father cursing her with his dying breath, yet when Padre Guardiano invites the monks to curse anyone who approaches Leonora's cell, she

is again plagued by anxious dreams. But then her features are transfigured and she appears to the monks as a martyr – as 'Our Lady of the Angels'.

INTERVAL

ACT III

SCENE 1: YEARS LATER – A MILITARY CAMP IN ITALY

Don Alvaro has not in fact returned to his native America but has enlisted as a volunteer in the hope of dying on the battlefield. Fate has decreed otherwise. He has risen through the ranks and, now a captain, is honoured as a war hero, albeit under a false name and with a new identity: Don Federico Herreros. He sees his whole life as a failure and cannot forget Leonora or the fatal events surrounding their separation. Like his army comrades, he tries to distract himself by consorting with other women. He believes that Leonora is dead and blames himself for the death of the woman he still loves.

Leonora's brother, Don Carlo, has likewise become caught up in the turmoil of war. He, too, has assumed a false name in order to escape from the shame and disgrace of his family's past. And he, too, is hailed as a valiant soldier, for all that he is now addicted to gambling and alcohol. While visiting a gambling den, he is almost stabbed to death, but a stranger comes to his aid: it is Don Alvaro. The two men feel a shared bond and swear to fight alongside one another, little suspecting who they actually are. But fate has long since linked their lives.

Don Alvaro is seriously wounded in an attack, but Carlo manages to rescue him. Alvaro needs an operation. Before he goes under the surgeon's knife, he gives his friend a case containing documents which Carlo is to burn in the event of his death. Carlo seeks to comfort Alvaro by promising him the Order of Calatrava as a reward for his bravery, but Alvaro reacts violently to the name. While waiting for the operation to be completed, Carlo begins to brood on Alvaro's reaction and wonders if Alvaro could be his sister's accursed lover. He keeps his word and does not open the letters that have been entrusted to him, but instead he finds a portrait of his sister. When the surgeon announces that Alvaro will live, Carlo is beside himself with

diabolical glee: as soon as Alvaro is recovered, he – Carlo – will avenge his father and kill Alvaro.

SCENE 2: ANOTHER THREE MONTHS LATER

Alvaro has regained his strength and Carlo prepares to carry out his promise, revealing his true identity and challenging the surprised Alvaro to a duel. Alvaro discovers that Leonora may still be alive. Still the dreamer, he tries to discourage Carlo from his thoughts of revenge and expresses the hope that all three of them can start a new life. But Carlo is implacable: not only Alvaro but Leonora too shall die at his hands. The two men throw themselves at each other and it is only thanks to their comrades' intervention that they are not killed. Appalled, Alvaro resolves to turn his back on the war and on a life of murder. He will seek asylum in a monastery.

Meanwhile, the soldiers are entertained by Preziosilla, who has kept her word and come with them to the front. An itinerant pedlar by the name of Trabuco has likewise fetched up in Italy, as has the surly Fra Melitone from Our Lady of the Angels, who is now working as a pastor and hoping that he may receive alms. It is hard to know who is actually a soldier in this Carnival atmosphere and who is serious about war. But the next attack is certain.

INTERVAL

ACT IV

SCENE 1: SPAIN, MANY YEARS LATER – THE MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS

The war has long been over. It has left a trail of devastation. Poverty and famine are rife. Every day the monks hand out food to the poor. Everyone has returned home: Preziosilla, Trabuco and Fra Melitone. Of the three, Fra Melitone fares best as his task is to ladle out soup. But there are always people who learn nothing from life, and so, far from being grateful, Melitone remains as bad-tempered as ever. When a stranger rings the monastery bell, he responds with typical ill humour. The new arrival is Don Carlo di Vargas who, after searching for him for many years, has finally found Don Alvaro. The latter has taken the name of Father Raffaele and is living in the monastery near which Leonora

settled as an anchorite many years earlier. Don Carlo has come in search of only one thing: revenge for the wrongs that were done to him and to his family. Once again Alvaro allows himself to be provoked when Carlo calls him a 'mulatto'. The two men rush away to fight a duel outside the monastery walls.

SCENE 2: LEONORA'S CELL

The two men fight their duel right outside Leonora's cell. Don Carlo is fatally wounded. In his despair, Alvaro insists that the dying man be given the last rites. Leonora begs the stranger to leave but then recognizes Alvaro and her brother. Instead of making his last confession, Carlo lashes out at Leonora, who has longed only for death after prayers and fasting have failed to bring her peace of mind. Finally reconciled with God, with whom she intercedes at the very moment of her death, she promises Alvaro forgiveness and redemption.

Christof Loy (translation: text*house*)

GRAND PASSIONS AND GREAT SINGING

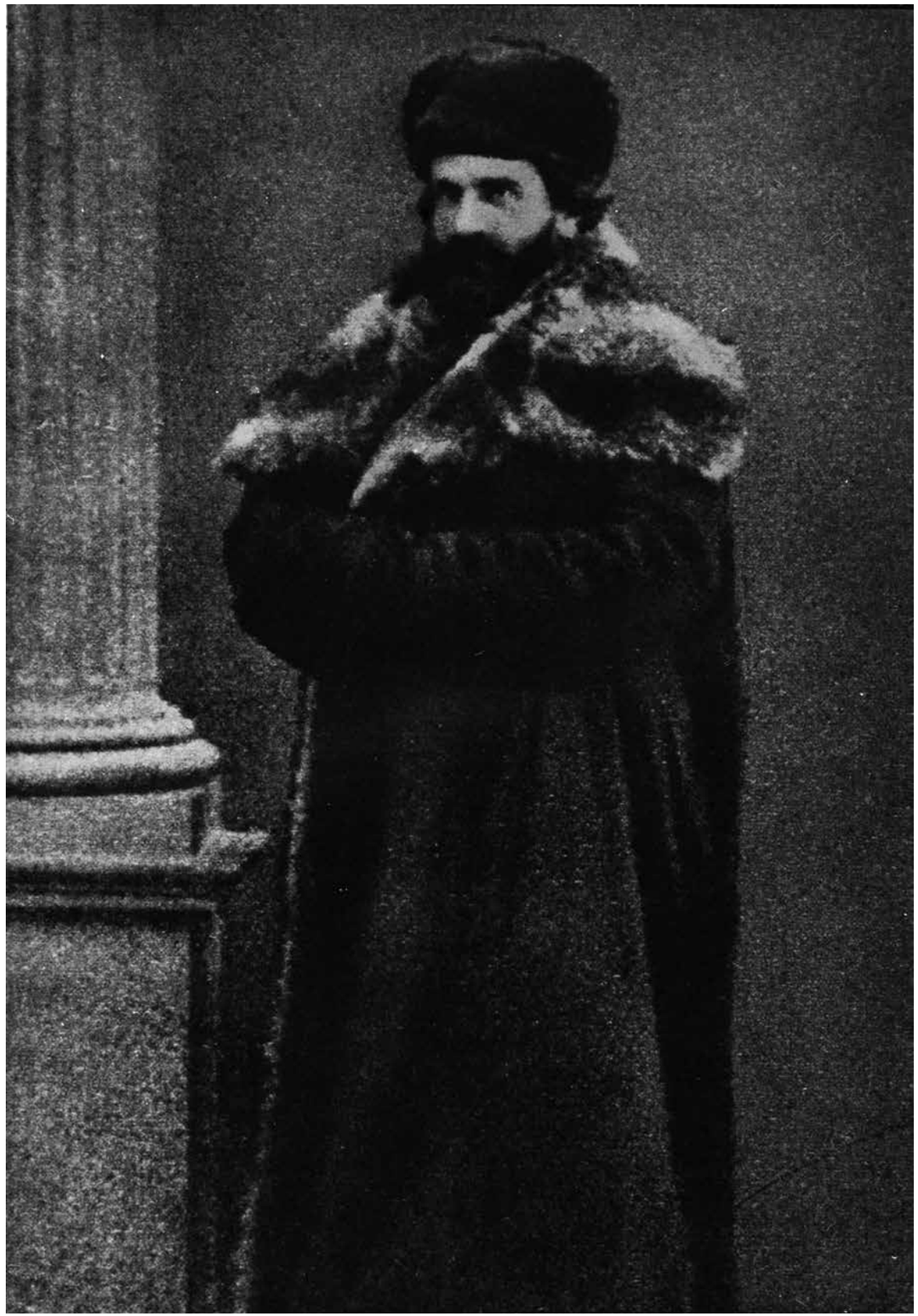
George Hall

Following the premiere in Rome in February 1859 of *Un ballo in maschera* – a work that had cost the composer a good deal of trouble due to censorship problems before eventually being performed – Verdi seemed to abandon composition. Other matters claimed his attention. In August of that same year he finally married his long-term companion Giuseppina Strepponi, with whom he had already lived for a decade. With the progress of the project to unify Italy gaining ground, the following month he also (somewhat unwillingly) accepted the role of deputy to the Assembly of the Parma Provinces as the representative of his native Busseto, and in January 1861 agreed to enter the new Italian parliament, as deputy for Borgo San Donnino; he would remain involved in his country's politics until 1865. Nevertheless, and despite not having composed anything for some four years, a request for a new opera from a far distant country once more set his mind towards writing for the theatre. The commission came, rather unusually, via a singer.

This was the *tenore robusto* Enrico Tamberlik (1820–89), who was particularly admired in heroic Italian and French roles as well as for his vivid declamation and brilliant top register: such hefty roles as Arnold in *Guillaume Tell*, Jean de Leyde in *Le Prophète* and Manrico in *Il trovatore* were meat and drink to him. Audiences at Covent Garden heard him regularly between 1850 and 1870, while another of his regular ports of call was the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, where he sang from 1850 to 1863.

It was on behalf of the latter venue that he sought to interest Verdi in producing a new work. Intrigued, the composer suggested the subject of Victor Hugo's play *Ruy Blas*, which proved unacceptable, but when Verdi threatened therefore to drop the entire matter he was told that it could be reinstated and that he could effectively make his own conditions. By then, though, Verdi had moved on to other possible source material – *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino* by Ángel de Saavedra, Third Duke of Rivas, a leading figure in the Spanish Romantic movement and briefly his country's prime minister. Verdi's regular librettist Francesco Maria Piave was brought on board and the composer also contacted his old friend Andrea Maffei, whose translation of Schiller's *Wallensteins Lager* he wanted to raid for the scene in the army camp.

The composition of the opera proceeded apace from September 1861 and the result was ready for Verdi to take when he and Giuseppina set off for Russia by way of Paris on 27 November: only the scoring remained to be done. Their planned trip, though, was foreshortened in January because the



Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) in St Petersburg for the 1862 *La forza del destino* premiere: photograph by anonymous Russian photographer

Portrait of Teresa Stolz (1834–1902), Leonora in the 1869 La Scala premiere of *La forza del destino*, by Gariboldi © Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan/De Agostini Picture Library/Bridgeman Images

soprano Verdi was expecting to have as his Leonora had fallen ill; it was therefore agreed that the production would be shelved for a year.

Verdi and Giuseppina visited Moscow before leaving Russia, travelling via Berlin, Paris and London (where the composer's *Inno delle nazioni* – commissioned for the Great Exhibition and initially intended for Tamberlik – was performed with Thérèse Tietjens as soloist at Her Majesty's Theatre on 24 May 1862), before returning to their home at Sant'Agata. In September 1862 they once more set off for Russia, and this time the premiere production in St Petersburg did go ahead, on 10 November.

In addition to Tamberlik, the cast included a number of other major artists: indeed it has been a notable feature of the work's performance history that it has repeatedly attracted the greatest voices and singers of each period both in the theatre and on recordings, the casting of the principal roles regularly matching the grand passions of the principals throughout the high-flown main action. The soprano Caroline Barbot (1830–93) sang Leonora – a role whose creation marked the highpoint of an illustrious career in which she appeared throughout Western Europe as well as Russia. Another French singer, and a regular at Covent Garden over more than a decade (1853–64), mezzo-soprano Constance Nantier-Didiée (1831–67) sang Preziosilla. Taking the baritone role of Carlo, Francesco Graziani (1828–1901) was a Verdi specialist and again a regular in Covent Garden's Royal Italian Opera seasons between 1855 and 1880. The Italian bass Gian Francesco Angelini (1830–1915) sang Padre Guardiano.

Perhaps the most surprising piece of casting was that of Achille De Bassini (1819–81) as Fra Melitone. Not the kind of traditional *buffo* baritone one might expect, he had created three sizable dramatic roles for Verdi: Doge Francesco Foscari in *I due Foscari* (1844), Pasha Seid in *Il corsaro* (1848) and the heroine's father in *Luisa Miller* (1849). 'I have a part for you,' wrote the composer to the singer on 28 October 1861:

> if you would be willing to accept it – comic, very charming – it's that of Fra Melitone. It will fit you to a T and I've almost identified it with you personally. Not that you are a buffoon, but you have a certain humorous vein which squares perfectly with the character that I've intended for you, assuming that you approve.

The Mariinsky production was conducted by Edoardo Baveri [Bauer] and Verdi oversaw the staging. The initial performances were very well received.

As a work by the most admired Italian composer of the day, *La forza del destino* was quickly taken up, including in Rome, Madrid, Reggio Emilia, Senigallia and Trieste (1863); Florence, Vienna and seven cities in the United States (1865); Genoa and Buenos Aires (1866); and Montevideo and London (1867). In London the cast at Her Majesty's Theatre was as starry as the original, consisting of such grandly voiced artists as Thérèse Tietjens (Leonora), Zelia Trebelli-Bettini (Preziosilla), Pietro Mongini (Alvaro) and Charles Santley (Carlo). Luigi Arditi conducted a staging by the theatre's manager, James Henry Mapleson.

But by then there was a general feeling that the opera was not an entire success, falling short of the central place in the repertory quickly won by most of its immediate predecessors. As early as 1863 Verdi himself expressed doubts about the ending, in which the three principal characters all die, and wrote of his intention of 'modifying the dénouement and making some changes at the end of the third act, but so far I've thought of nothing.' He consulted (or was offered advice by) such interested parties as Piave and Jules Perrin, the director of the Paris Opera, where a production was planned; but it was only when his publisher Tito Ricordi suggested presenting the work at La Scala, Milan during the 1869 carnival season that Verdi applied himself seriously to the task of revision. As Piave was by then no longer available (he had suffered a serious stroke in 1867), the composer collaborated with Antonio Ghislanzoni, subsequently the librettist of *Aida*. The extent and nature of the revisions are described elsewhere in this programme.

The result was performed for the Milanese public on 27 February 1869, again with some mighty vocalists in the cast. Long resident in Italy, and sufficiently close to Verdi for a while to cause his wife concern, Bohemian soprano Teresa Stolz (1834–1902) sang Leonora. The first exponent of the title role of *Aida* in Italy on 8 February 1872 (the opera, of course, had been given its premiere in Cairo on 24 December 1871), she was also the first soprano soloist in Verdi's Requiem on 22 May 1874 and (under his baton) at the Royal Albert Hall in London on 15 May 1875. Verdi expert Andrew Porter described her as 'the Verdian dramatic

soprano *par excellence*, powerful, passionate in utterance, but dignified in manner and secure in tone and control.'

Creator of the title roles in two important works of the period – Franco Faccio's *Amleto* (1865) and Filippo Marchetti's *Ruy Blas* (1869) – the tenor Mario Tiberini (1826–80) sang Alvaro. The other cast members were Luigi Colonnese (Carlo), Giacomo Rota (Fra Melitone), Ida Benza (Preziosilla) and Marcello Junca (Padre Guardiano), with Eugenio Terziani conducting and Verdi once again directing.

In revised form the opera went on to circulate in many more cities worldwide, notably London (1874), Paris (1876), Berlin (1878) and New York (1880). The first UK performance of the revised version was once again given at Her Majesty's. Yet despite Verdi's alterations the work still lacked the popular appeal of such staples as *Rigoletto*, *La traviata*, *Il trovatore* and *Un ballo in maschera*, though a significant episode in its slowly developing success history came with its first-ever production at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, on 15 November 1918, when it opened the company's season – then as now a prestigious event. Most notable among a remarkable cast was the Leonora, Rosa Ponselle (1897–1981), who was making her very first appearance on the operatic stage following earlier appearances on the vaudeville circuit as part of a popular double-act with her sister, Carmela. Enrico Caruso – who had arranged Rosa's successful audition with the Metropolitan Opera's manager, Giulio Gatti-Casazza – sang Alvaro, with Giuseppe De Luca as Carlo. Now regarded as one of the 20th century's greatest sopranos, Ponselle remained a leading star at the Metroplitan Opera until her retirement in 1937.

It was through Ponselle's participation, in fact, that *La forza del destino* first entered the repertory at Covent Garden on 1 June 1931, when the soprano was taking part in her third and final season at the Royal Opera House (other than at Covent Garden and one appearance at the Maggio Musicale in Florence, Ponselle only ever sang at the Metropolitan Opera). Appearing with her on this occasion were Aureliano Pertile (Alvaro) – perhaps the most dramatically exciting of interwar Italian tenors, and a great favourite of Toscanini; the fine dramatic baritone Benvenuto Franci as Carlo; Gianna Pederzini as Preziosilla; *buffo* specialist Ernesto Badini (he gave premieres of works by Zandonai, Mascagni, Giordano and Wolf-Ferrari) as Fra Melitone; and resplendent Italian bass Tancredi Pasero as Padre Guardiano. Master conductor of Italian opera Tullio Serafin was on the podium.

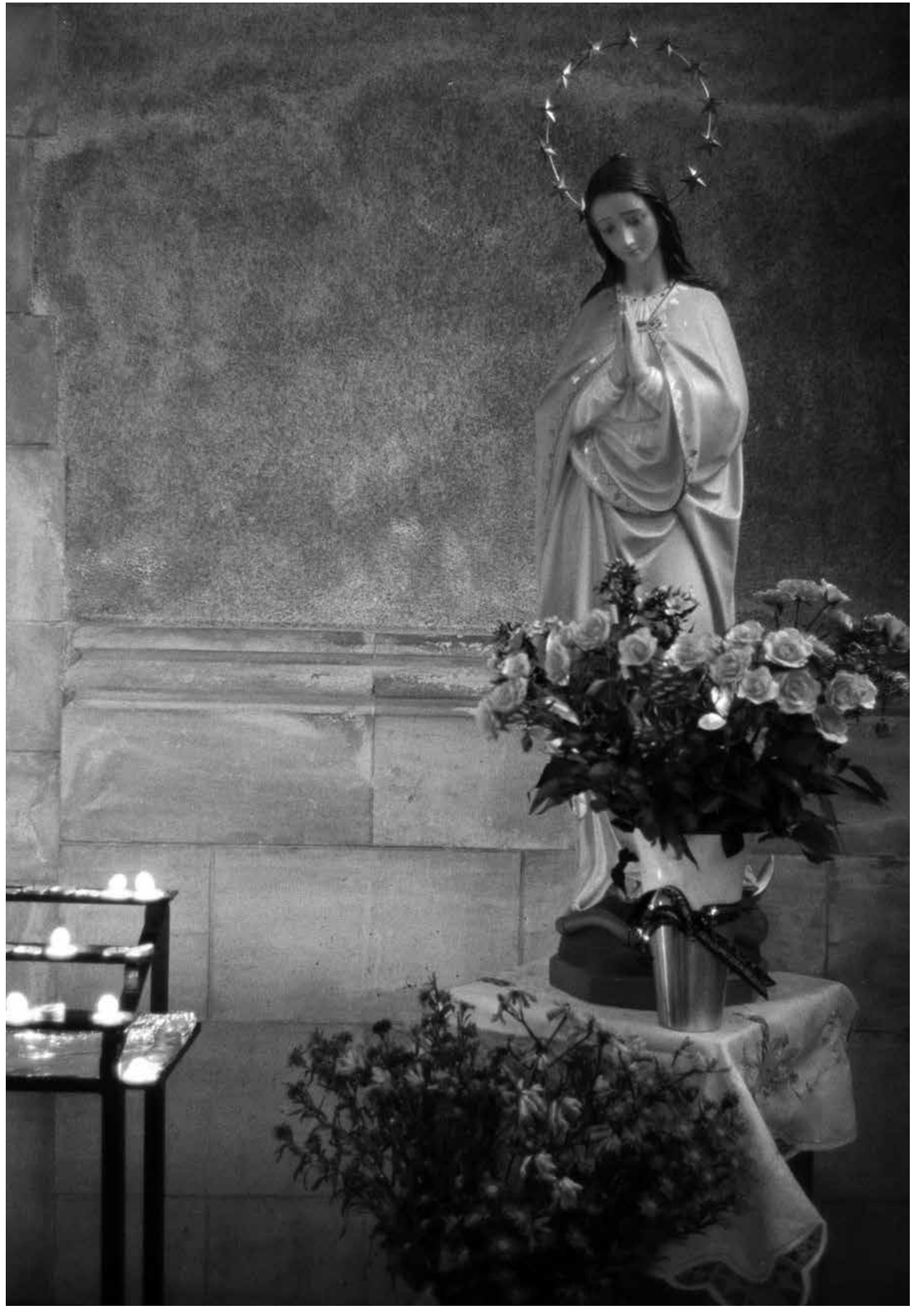
La forza del destino returned to the repertory of the Covent Garden Opera Company in September 1962, when Sam Wanamaker directed and Georg Solti conducted a controversial production starring Floriana Cavalli (Leonora), Josephine Veasey (Preziosilla), Carlo Bergonzi (Alvaro), John Shaw (Carlo), Renato Capecchi (Fra Melitone) and Nicolai Ghiaurov (Padre Guardiano). It was revived in 1973 and 1975.

Over recent decades there has been renewed interest in alternative versions of Verdi's works, including the original St Petersburg version of *La forza del destino* which (appropriately) the Kirov Opera brought to Covent Garden on 10 July 2001. Andrei Voitenko's designs emulated the original designs for the 1862 premiere production by Andreas Roller: Gianandrea Noseda conducted and Elijah Moshinsky directed. The cast consisted of Irina Gordei (Leonora), Gegam Grigorian (Alvaro), Nikolai Putilin (Carlo), Georgy Zastavny (Fra Melitone), Ekaterina Semenchuk (Preziosilla) and Mikhail Kit (Padre Guardiano).

The Royal Opera's last production of the standard, revised 1869 version opened on 18 October 2004. The cast included Violeta Urmana (Leonora), Marie-Ange Todorovitch (Preziosilla), Salvatore Licitra (Alvaro), Ambrogio Maestri (Carlo), Roberto de Candia (Fra Melitone) and Ferruccio Furlanetto (Padre Guardiano). Antonio Pappano conducted and Patrizia Frini revived the original production from La Scala, Milan.

The current production first appeared at the Royal Opera House on 21 March 2019, when the cast featured Anna Netrebko and Liudmyla Monastyrska (Leonora), Veronica Simeoni and Aigul Akhmetshina (Preziosilla), Jonas Kaufman and Yusif Eyvazov (Alvaro), Ludovic Tézier and Christopher Maltman (Carlo), Ferruccio Furlanetto (Padre Guardiano) and Alessandro Corbelli (Fra Melitone). Antonio Pappano conducted.

—George Hall writes widely on classical music in general and opera in particular for such publications as *The Stage*, *Opera* and *BBC Music Magazine*.



Statue of the Virgin Mary in St George's Catholic Cathedral, London (2001)

La forza del destino ©2019 ROH. Photographed by Bill Cooper

VICTIMS OF FATE

Sarah Lenton

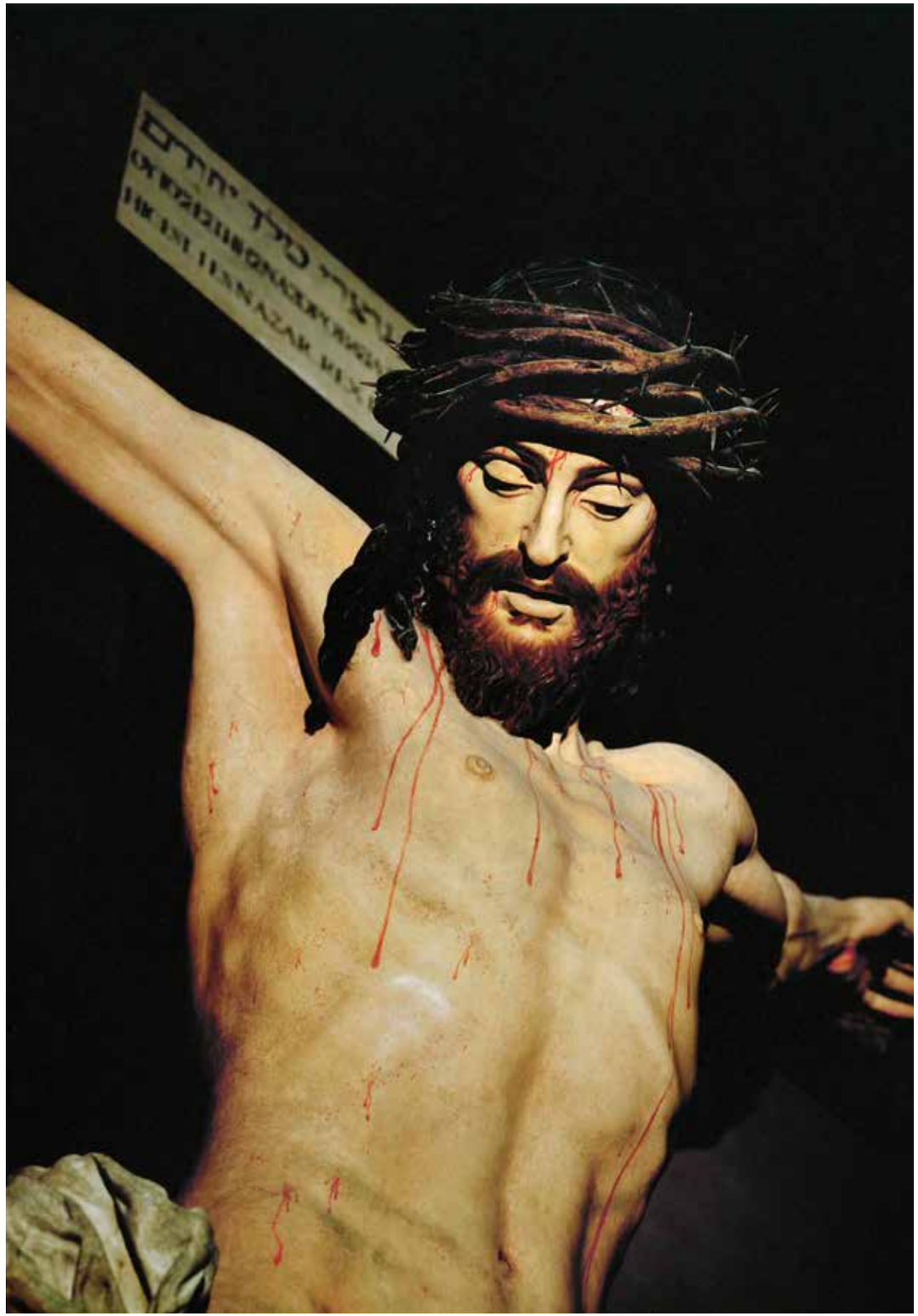
Just before the Armada set sail, the papal agent in Lisbon talked to a senior officer in the Spanish fleet. The agent asked him, if they met the English fleet in the Channel, whether they expected to win. 'Of course!' said the Spaniard. 'How can you be so sure?' 'It's very simple,' came the reply:

> It is well known we fight in God's cause. So, when we meet the English, God will surely arrange matters so that we can grapple and board them, either by sending some strange freak of weather or, more likely, just by depriving the English of their wits. [Because] unless God helps us by a miracle, the English who have faster and handier ships than ours... will never close with us. So we are sailing in the confident hope of a miracle.

Spanish fatalism was proverbial. Richard Ford, who lived in Spain from 1830 to 1833, put it down to the soothing effect of tobacco – 'which is in every Spaniard's mouth, otherwise he would resemble a house without a chimney'. He noticed the habitual shrug of the shoulders over the chances of surviving illness or robbery or any other everyday ill and, though acknowledging the slight religious reasons given for this ('when disease is thought to be a divine punishment... it is held wicked to resist by calling in human aid') he came to the conclusion it was a settled habit of mind.

All 19th-century travellers to Spain exclaimed at the calm acceptance of 'empty larders, vicious political institutions and a very hot climate' shown by the population. Théophile Gautier watched the convicts condemned to street cleaning, barely supervised: 'they go and sit or lie on some door-step. It would be perfectly easy for them to escape; but when I mentioned this, the answer came that their natural goodness prevented it.' Natural goodness or not, the convicts were clearly descendants of the pícaros – the rogues – that enliven the books and dramas of Spain's Golden Age. With the difference that the bandits, con artists and whores of the 17th century, though as fatalistic as their successors, responded to the indifference of a baffling and untrustworthy universe by becoming cheats themselves. The 19th-century pícaro simply gave up, and rolled a cigarette.

Ordinary Spaniards, beggars, pilgrims and peasants are the foil against which the aristocratic hero and heroine of *La forza del destino* play out their destiny. And we discover that, in spite



Crucifix: wood sculpture (1640) by Juan Martínez Montañés (1568–1649)

Jonas Kaufmann, *La forza del destino* ©2019 ROH. Photographed by Bill Cooper

of their class, Alvaro and Leonora are just as passive: they may flee (in opposite directions) after the appallingly unlucky pistol shot that kills her father but, for the rest of the opera, they disassociate themselves from any active part in the plot altogether. Alvaro tries to get himself killed in army service, Leonora retires to a hermitage.

As Christians, they wouldn't believe in 'Destino' or 'Fate' anyway. That word, used popularly to describe events that appear to be determined by some unknown, and possibly impersonal, power, is covered by the doctrine of Divine Providence. Catholics and Protestants believed in a general providence, manifesting itself in the dependable operation of natural law – and a special providence, manifesting itself in a particular event. ('There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow', *Hamlet*, Act V.) However, unlike Fate, Divine Providence has built-in freedoms, as the Armada captain knew very well: one is God's prerogative to intervene in the orderly course of events with a miracle, and the other is human free will.

Spanish drama was completely orthodox: it spoke to a Catholic public and was monitored ultimately by the Inquisition. Ideas like the reduction of all events (mental as well as physical) to the laws of nature, would never have made it to the stage, even supposing a Christian dramatist had felt inclined to write them. Shakespeare is as orthodox as any Spaniard when he has the bastard Edmund (*King Lear*, Act I) scoff at the idea that the stars made him the villain he is: 'Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.' Calderón's *Life is a Dream*, played before the Spanish court in 1635, is a case in point. The hero, Prince Segismundo, saddled at birth with an Oedipus-type prediction that he will overthrow his royal father, is promptly locked away. He eventually escapes, heads up a rebellion and – naturally – defeats the king. At which point, enter a twist. At the last moment the prince looks up at the sky and sees, not the inexorable hand of fate, but God's providential ordering of nature:

> What heaven has decreed shall come To pass is writ in God's own script Upon this drawing board of blue.

Everything has indeed happened as the prophecy foretold but Segismundo knows he is for all that a free agent and, exercising his native virtue, turns augury on its head, and submits to the king.

Non-Christian descriptions of the universe were gathering apace but Spain, secure behind the Pyrenees, with customs officers impounding foreign books – especially ones in French – was less affected by Enlightenment, or Deism, or Romanticism, than the rest of Europe. An isolation that was unwittingly lifted by the repressive Ferdinand VII. His policy of exiling Spanish liberals meant an already turbulent generation of writers were able to catch up with modern ideas on their travels, and come home ready to turn them into literature.

One such was the Duke of Rivas, author of *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino*, on which Verdi's opera is based. Fleeing for his life in 1823 he gravitated to English speaking centres – Gibraltar, London, Malta – and began to read modern authors. We don't know his library but, going by *Don Álvaro*, it must have included Byron, Hugo and Schiller, as well as classics from Spain's Golden Age. Spain is there with the 'chorus' of beggars and pedlars, Byron is obvious in his moody isolated hero, Hugo's *Ernani* inspired the furiously driven plot and Schiller is squarely responsible for the Fate motif.

And it's the word 'sino' (destiny or fate) that caught Verdi's eye. The alternative title of Rivas' play became the title of the opera and a theme associated with 'Fate' is the opera's leading musical motif. But it is a Romantic, and ultimately Spanish, version of the idea. That comes mostly from Schiller. Like Goethe, Schiller discovered Shakespeare in his youth when the English poet came upon him 'like a thunderbolt'. The formal classic virtues of French drama, which dominated the German stage, were instantly discarded as Schiller replicated what he understood to be the governing principles of Shakespearean drama: the range, the mixture of genres, and an autonomous hero who collides with family, society and the gods themselves. But the pull of the classics eventually proved to be too strong. Both he and Goethe revisited Greek tragedy, particularly *Oedipus Rex*, and felt the working out of Fate in Sophocles' play gave coherence, and moral order, to the drama.

Which was all very well, but as neither Schiller nor his public believed in the Greek gods, Fate was replaced by astronomical destiny (the stars) or by a curse. And to make things more difficult for himself, Schiller clearly believed that man was also a responsible moral agent. The result was an improbable melodrama, *Die Braut von Messina*

(The Bride of Messina), and the epic three part drama, *Wallenstein*. A couple of scenes from Maffei's translation of the second part, *Wallenstein's Camp*, went straight into the encampment scene in Verdi's opera. It is typical of Verdi that he immediately fastened on the Shakespearean breadth of these scenes, particularly the comic friar who became his Melitone, leaving Schiller to wrestle with such unambiguous lines as 'There's no such thing as chance / And what to us seems merest accident / Springs from the deepest source of destiny' as he tried to force his strong-willed hero, Wallenstein, into the plot. The nearest the opera libretto can come up with is Alvaro's 'O cruel destiny! Once again you deride me!' as he realizes that, yet again, he's killed a Calatrava – which has the philosophical force of an 'O ye gods!' in a standard melodrama. And there's a case for saying that Alvaro (and Leonora) would be more at home in a 'Fate Tragedy' than a Schiller play.

Fate Tragedies (*Schicksalstragödien*) were a German enthusiasm that rapidly made their way to the London stage. Taking their cue from Schiller, the shows have melodramatic plots and a simple story line that reduces Fate to a prophetic curse that sets off a train of catastrophes. Zacharias Werner's *Der vierundzwanzigste Februar* (24 February) is a good example and has a superficial resemblance to *Forza*. A father curses his son as he dies from an all too well-aimed knife, and the family are doomed to reach for the knife on random 24 Februaries ever after, when they wish to cut each other's throats. (Why, as Carlyle remarked, they keep the knife hanging on a peg for well over half a century remains a mystery.) Alvaro may appropriate the Fate theme, and its curse, but in fact Leonora has as good a claim. As Julian Budden points out, the Fate motif in *Forza* is associated with her, and in Rivas's play, the gypsy girl Preciosilla (Verdi's Preziosilla) recalls how to this day her mother's eyes fill with tears as she remembers the horoscope she read for the infant heroine. But curses and horoscopes are the stuff of folktales and – in 19th-century Spain – the special province of gypsies. Bizet picked it up in the fate motif that sounds throughout *Carmen*, and the sombre fatalism of Carmen herself as she turns over the Ace of Spades in the Card Trio. We have come a long way from Sophocles.

Peter Conrad, in a persuasive article in the ENO guide to this opera, argues that the 'Destino' of the title is a 19th-century phenomenon. It has nothing to do with individuals but reflects that century's fascination with the remorseless drive of history; Verdi 'turns his orchestra into a propulsive machine like Adam's turbines or Dickens's railway'. In this reading Alvaro and Leonora are oppressed by the mindless pressure of events (and of course the relentless pace of the show). But Gautier, writing in 1843, surely gets nearer the motivation of the opera when he says that the controlling force of Spanish drama is not fate at all, but honour. 'The point of honour', he writes, 'plays the same part in Spanish comedy as fate did to Greek tragedy... the Castilian point of honour is always perfectly logical and consistent with itself. The Spaniard draws his sword against people he may love 'but whom an imperious necessity forces him to slay'. This perfectly describes those implacable Spanish assassins Count di Luna in *Il trovatore*, Silva in *Ernani* and Don Carlo in *Forza*, plus the dotty honour of their victims, who always rise to the bait and are usually killed as a result. (Alvaro is spared his plunge off a cliff in the second version of the opera – the one played tonight.)

Rivas's play has its Romantic gestures – the violent emotions, the doomed hero, the fatal abyss – but its logic is Spanish and its one energetic character, Don Carlo, makes sure the action culminates correctly and fatally. When you add the humane compassion, which is Verdi's contribution, it might seem that Fate – in any august sense – has been written out of the show. And yet it haunts the piece: as you watch you know nothing will go right, pistols will go off, Carlo will open the incriminating box and the duelling men will end up at Leonora's hermitage. It's like the wry shrug you get at the end of a Portuguese fado song, 'Tudo isto é fado'. It's all fate.

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EPIC TRANSFORMATIONS

Francesco Izzo

A concise account of the history of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *La forza del destino* could plausibly read as follows: 'there are two versions of *La forza del destino*: the first received its premiere performance at St Petersburg in 1862, and the second at Milan's La Scala in 1869.'

Such a statement may well seem correct – but it is an oversimplification, to put it mildly. There are, indeed, other operas by Verdi for which the tale of two versions can be told fairly straightforwardly; for example *Macbeth*, given its premiere in 1847 and revised for Paris in 1865, or *Simon Boccanegra*, which had its premiere in Venice in 1857 and was revised for La Scala almost a quarter of a century later. In those well-known instances, to be sure, Verdi left his scores alone for many years. With *Simon Boccanegra*, Verdi's publisher, Ricordi, repeatedly sought to persuade the composer to make changes, but, as late as 2 May 1879, in a characteristically emphatic letter to Giulio Ricordi, Verdi refused to cooperate: 'Yesterday I received a large parcel that I suppose to be a score of *Simone*. If you come to Sant'Agata six months, a year, two or three, etc. from now you will find it untouched just as you sent it to me. I hate unnecessary things.' Of course he then changed his mind, collaborating with Arrigo Boito on a thorough revision of libretto and music of *Simon Boccanegra*, first performed at La Scala in 1881.

The tale of *La forza del destino* is more complex, however. Far from being a linear, two-step process of creation and revision, this opera comes across as a remarkable series of events, some under Verdi's control, others driven by external factors or, it is tempting to say, destiny. The account of the genesis of *La forza del destino* must start not in 1862, but in 1861, when negotiations with St Petersburg began early in the year and a contract was signed on 3 June. A couple of weeks later the title of the opera was identified, and from there, work proceeded in earnest, with various letters to librettist Francesco Maria Piave tracing the progress. By 22 November a draft of the opera was completed. In Verdi's words to Enrico Tamberlik, the tenor who was to create the role of Don Alvaro: 'The opera is completely composed... I will do the orchestration during piano rehearsals.' The letter gives a wonderful glimpse into Verdi's creative process; he considered the composition to be finished once he had completed what is often called a 'continuity draft' – consisting of vocal parts, a bass line and instrumental cues. The transfer of that draft into a 'skeleton' full score and the orchestration were complementary and, in a way, mechanical.

Veronica Simeoni, *La forza del destino* ©2019 ROH. Photographed by Bill Cooper

Liudmyla Monastyrska, *La forza del destino* ©2019 ROH. Photographed by Bill Cooper

As he had written to a friend on 26 October: 'I'll need to orchestrate [the opera], but that's nothing, since that kind of work can go forward even fifteen minutes at a time.'

Confident that the work was complete and would soon see the light of day, Verdi departed for St Petersburg, arriving on 6 December. Destiny then deployed its force: the soprano Emma La Grua had been taken ill, and rehearsals couldn't even begin. Verdi went back to Italy, resumed work on the score making various changes, and only returned to St Petersburg on 24 September 1862. During the rehearsal period he made Ricordi aware of further modifications, and *La forza del destino* was finally performed on 10 November, nearly a year after Verdi had announced its completion. The preliminary sketches and discarded pages of the *1861 version* (note the emphasis) show that the opera would have been different had La Grua's health cooperated. Although one should feel no particular urge to attempt a reconstruction of that version, such an operation would certainly be possible, and we should at least be aware that what we commonly call the 'first version' of *La forza del destino* should perhaps be more cautiously referred to as the '1862 version.'

Nor should one believe that Verdi then set the opera aside until the time came to revise it for La Scala. Having directed the Madrid premiere of *La forza del destino* in February 1863, he developed significant doubts about aspects of the opera, and particularly the ends of Act III and Act IV. Plans were made for a revision for Paris, and Achille de Lauzières (the librettist and translator who years later was responsible for translating *Don Carlos* into Italian) was brought in to write a different finale, while Verdi himself made an analogous request of Piave. The outcome of these attempts was 'a terrible mess,' as the composer wrote to Ricordi on 2 July 1864: 'I had Piave do one [finale]; another was sent just now by de Lauzières from Paris, and I like neither one nor the other.'

In the end, Verdi turned first to the revision of *Macbeth* and then to the composition of *Don Carlos* for Paris; plans for the revision of *Forza* were cast aside and revived only in 1868. By that time, a stroke had left Piave incapacitated, and it was in collaboration with Antonio Ghislanzoni, the future librettist of *Aida*, that *La forza del destino* was updated and provided with a new finale, and that Verdi revised the score for the first production of the opera at La Scala on 27 February 1869.

Some of the most notable changes involved the beginning and closing of the opera. The celebrated orchestral overture that, before the action begins to unfold, presents a potpourri of notable themes from the opera, was composed for La Scala – although it draws to no small extent on a much shorter 1862 *preludio*, which already contained the opening three-note unison (stated twice) followed by the memorable theme in the minor associated with Leonora's anguish. At the end of the opera, Verdi had long been dissatisfied with the overwhelmingly grisly denouement of the 1862 version, which within a few minutes displayed an onstage duel with Don Alvaro mortally wounding Don Carlo, the latter stabbing Leonora to death before collapsing, and, at the very end, Don Alvaro leaping off a cliff to his death before a chorus of horrified monks. Collaboration with Ghislanzoni resulted

in a scene in which both the duel and the stabbing of Leonora happen offstage, and Leonora returns to die in Don Alvaro's arms, with every promise of a radiant reunion in heaven. Arriving at this result was not entirely straightforward, however: at one point, Ghislanzoni suggested bringing back the elevating Marian chorus that concludes Act II ('La Vergine degli angeli'), but Verdi resisted the idea, stating: 'It is a ceremony, a rite that cannot be repeated.' And he added: 'If the poet can find an ending which is good both logically and theatrically, the musical ending will automatically be good.'

Such a substantial transformation of the finale is not altogether surprising. It is to be understood not as a rectification of an intrinsic weakness, but rather as a reflection of Verdi's shifting priorities and of changing broader trends in opera after the mid-century.

Onstage death scenes had been falling out of favour for some time, and in his 1865 revision of *Macbeth* Verdi had already done away with the death of the protagonist that concluded the first version. (In modern performances of *Macbeth*, that death scene is often reinstated, while retaining the frame of the final version with the closing victory chorus; an awkward compromise in many respects, but one that allows baritones to sing the powerful solo 'Mal per me che m'affidai', which Verdi had omitted.)

The other substantial portion that had been troubling the composer following early productions of *La forza del destino* was the encampment scene that concludes Act III. On 3 October 1863 he had written to Ricordi that he was holding on to the score not only because of the finale, but also because he wished to make changes to that scene. 'But so far I have thought of nothing', he remarked. One can feel his pain. A key difficulty had been that the entire act was heavily unbalanced toward Don Alvaro, who opened it by singing his familiar *romanza* ('O tu che in seno agl'angeli') and concluded it with a forceful aria, when he believes he has killed Don Carlo. The latter piece, ending with a high C, provided Tamberlik with an excellent opportunity to bring down the house. Thus, in that version the encampment scene progressed through a sequence of women and soldiers celebrating military life, Trabuco selling things, beggars begging, Melitone preaching and Preziosilla launching the infectious choral 'Rataplan'; only at that point did Don Alvaro and Don Carlo reappear, singing a full-fledged duet before heading off to fight a duel. The suppression of Don Alvaro's aria presented Verdi with the difficulty of providing the act with a suitable conclusion – no easy feat. In the end, he saved the 'Rataplan' chorus for the end and shifted the duet and ensuing duel to the beginning of the encampment scene. Although this is the version we have known, loved and performed with few exceptions for the past 150 years, it confronts us with a twofold weakness. Musically, in the 1869 version Act III is broken into two segments, the first dominated by Don Alvaro and Don Carlo and the second a large choral tableau; these two segments hardly gel. Theatrically, even those of us who are inclined to suspend disbelief at the opera may be puzzled that no sooner has Alvaro risen from the operating table that he is fit enough not only to fight a duel, but also to prevail in it. It is no wonder that Franz Werfel, the Austrian-Bohemian author who became successful in the 1920s with

his *Verdi – A Novel of the Opera*, proposed a hybrid version of this scene, which reinstated in part the order of events of the 1862 version. Such an approach, which postpones the duet and the duel while omitting Alvaro's closing aria and ending with the 'Rataplan', has been attempted repeatedly in the theatre, most recently by the Welsh National Opera. And it should come as no surprise if this or other ways to combine the 1862 and 1869 versions were not tried out in the future. Thanks to the work of Philip Gossett and William Holmes we have a reliable critical edition of these two versions, not yet published but already available for performance, and performers, of course, may use the edition as they wish.

That Verdi himself, and others who came long after he was gone, have struggled with aspects of *La forza del destino* tells us a great deal about the status of this work in Verdi's output. For all the wonders of the *sinfonia* and the final trio, acceptance of the 1869 version does not come without complications. The same may be true of *Macbeth* or *Simon Boccanegra*, perhaps, but certainly not to a comparable extent. For all the strokes of fate that affected its creation and revisions, it is fair to say that there is no single or best *La forza del destino*; there are, rather, multiple forces at work in shaping the opera in 1861, 1862 and 1869; at various points in between; and even beyond Verdi's lifespan and to the present day. It is, after all, a work that instead of building on the ideals of unity and concision, which had been so central to many of Verdi's works of the 1840s and 50s, thrives on diversity and complexity. The shifts in expressive register, throughout the opera and especially within the encampment scene, are the most extreme one encounters in any opera by Verdi; and the action, unfolding in Spain and Italy over several years, is complex to say the least. This opera is a veritable epic, and calls for a comparison not so much with Verdi's other works based on Spanish plays, *Il trovatore* and *Simon Boccanegra*, but with a much earlier opera, *I Lombardi alla prima crociata* (1843), which is based on an epic poem and traces the vicissitudes of various characters over a period of years and across distant lands. And that work, too, underwent a makeover when Verdi used it as the basis for his first French opera, *Jérusalem* (1847); but the plots are so different and there is so much new music in *Jérusalem* that it is actually sensible to regard it as a different work. *La forza del destino*, instead, may be seen as 'one', and there are good reasons to be content with either of the versions that Verdi sanctioned in St Petersburg and Milan. But as we look closely, it can transform itself before our eyes, in the rehearsal room, in the pit and on stage. And the tale of its versions is itself an epic – one that may never come to full closure.

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WOEFUL KNOWLEDGE

David Roberts

You might expect a world expert on trauma to find the perfect example of the condition among case notes. Instead, Sigmund Freud cited an episode in Torquato Tasso's 1581 poem, *La Gerusalemme liberata*. It was, Freud wrote, the most moving account of trauma he knew, and it goes like this: a Christian knight, Tancredi, kills his Saracen opponent in single combat only to discover he has slain his beloved Clorinda. Tasso dwells on Tancredi's agony. In the 1600 translation by Edward Fairfax:

> With trembling hands her visor he untied,
> Which done he saw, and seeing, knew her face,
> And lost therewith his speech and moving quite,
> Oh woeful knowledge, ah unhappy sight!

Jonas Kaufmann and Ludovic Tézier, *La forza del destino* ©2019 ROH.
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Monteverdi's operatic *scena*, *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, ends with Clorinda's dying breath, but in Tasso there is worse to come. After Clorinda's burial, Tancredi rides into a magic forest and cuts at a tree. To his horror, blood pours from the trunk and the voice of his beloved cries out. As Fairfax puts it:

> 'Enough, enough!' the voice lamenting said,
> 'Tancred, thou hast me hurt, thou didst me drive
> Out of the body of a noble maid
> Who with me lived, whom late I kept on live,
> And now within this woeful cypress laid,
> My tender rind thy weapon sharp doth rive,
> Cruel, is't not enough thy foes to kill,
> But in their graves wilt thou torment them still?'

No! He has done it again! Whatever woeful knowledge Tancredi possessed in battle has been amplified tenfold, and his physical reactions follow suit. Second time round:

> cold and trembling waxed his frozen heart,
> Such strange effects, such passions it torment,
> Out of his feeble hand his weapon start,
> Himself out of his wits nigh, after went:
> Wounded he saw, he thought, for pain and smart,
> His lady weep, complain, mourn, and lament,
> Nor could he suffer her dear blood to see,
> Or hear her sighs that deep far fetched be.

In battle he was stunned into statuesque silence; faced with this talking tree, the original image returns to torment him. In battle, Fairfax prolongs Tancredi's witness ('He saw, and seeing...'), as though driving the dreadful image further into his consciousness; in the forest, 'he saw, *he thought*'. The delicate qualification tells us that Tancredi doesn't actually 'see' at all. He just remembers what it was like the first time.

Freud was fascinated by trauma partly because it seemed in one sense so very un-Freudian. Rather than surfacing hidden anxieties indirectly through symbols (snakes, wolves, rockets launching, steam trains entering tunnels etc.), trauma is often terrifyingly literal, an image that stubbornly stays just the way it always has been. Such repetition, proposed Freud, is a diseased form of remembering. But his main interest was not in Tancredi's anguish. If it's bad enough to go through the shock of accidental homicide all over again, imagine how it is for the victim. Hers is merely a ghostly voice, consigned to the oblivion of a forest, awakened only when wounded again. For Freud, the episode epitomized the suffering of someone who had looked death in the face and by some miracle learned to speak of it. Tasso spoke to him, in other words, of two deeply personal topics: the historic peril endured by the Jews, which Freud explored in *Moses and Monotheism*, a work written after his own exodus from Nazi-occupied Vienna; and of psychoanalysis itself, the profession he invented via his lifetime's devotion to teasing from patients a language they barely knew they possessed.

If memories of violence and death are common occasions of trauma in Western art and literature, so is the exile Freud pondered in *Moses and Monotheism*. The history of traumatic departure extends further back than Exodus, to the moment in Genesis when Adam and Eve make their solitary way out of Eden; although it takes Masaccio's heart-rent *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* to comprehend its catastrophic emotional legacy. Alternative traditions identify a still earlier fall: that of the sometime angels whose leader got Adam and Eve into trouble in the first place. When Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus doubts Mephistopheles's courage in regretting his own fall from grace, he gets a bitter response:

> Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.
> Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God,
> And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
> Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
> In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss?

Remembering the beauty of life at its best can be no less traumatic than witnessing the horror of death. Marlowe peerlessly evokes the misery of knowing you are not, in the new Calvinist scheme of things, one of the chosen few.

It is not all about memory, of course. In the greatest of all tragedies of damnation, Shakespeare painted a hero who first appears traumatized by images he has not yet seen. Macbeth may have unseamed his enemy 'from the nave to the chops and fixed his head upon [the] battlements' but what really unnerves him is a vision whose subject – killing his own king – he cannot name:

> Why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
> And make my seated heart knock against my ribs
> Against the use of nature? Present fears are less
> Than horrible imaginings.

He spends the rest of the play murdering in order to obliterate the 'terrible dreams that shake [him] nightly' and in consequence loses wife, life and soul. 'Hence, horrible shadow', he cries to Banquo's ghost. It is not just a spectre he dismisses, but his own last vestige of conscience. Trauma, Shakespeare understood, is a necessary condition of being human and humane.

Storytellers continue to find in the traumas of memory an invitation to experiment with structure, to blend past with present and present with future. The film voted 'greatest of all time' in 2012, Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, depicts a retired policeman disastrously trying to resurrect the past in order to escape its torment. Christopher Nolan's virtuoso creation of 2000, *Memento*, shows a man struggling with memory loss in search of his wife's murderer. He pieces together photos, tattoos and other traces of the past to lead him back to the traumatic event. The film mimics his anguish by splicing two narratives: one in monochrome that moves forward in time; another in colour that goes backwards. At the end, the two meet to form a single story. In 2005, Alexander Masters published *Stuart: a Life*

Backwards, a biography that reverses chronology to tell the story of a homeless man by digging progressively further into his traumatic past before lighting on the horrifying exposure to violence that had produced what he had tragically become. Its backwards narrative is a vehicle of profound sympathy, acting out for readers what it takes to understand another human being. By contrast, Philip K. Dick's 1966 short story, 'We Can Remember It For You Wholesale', adapted twice for cinema as *Total Recall*, imagines a world where the whole idea of discovering a real, remembered event or traumatic cause is subverted. Microchips can supply whatever you want to recall, even if you were never there.

To turn, finally, to Verdi and *La forza del destino* is to return to the territory charted by Tasso. Like Tancredi, Verdi's Don Alvaro is haunted by an accidental death. But Verdi's source boasted still more ghosts. Saavedra's *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino* was a groundbreaking romantic drama of 1835 which shocked critics with its free treatment of time and space. Siblings Leonora and Alfonso have to contend with the deaths of a brother (Carlos) as well as their father. Death intensifies the triangular relationship between brother (named Carlos in the opera), sister and lover (Alvaro), which became the main focus of Verdi and his librettist, Piave. *La forza* sits midway between the poles of Verdi's interest in the dramatic and musical potential of trauma, for which he turned naturally to Shakespeare, from *Macbeth* in 1847 to *Otello* in 1887. Like the Macbeth of Shakespeare's Act I, Othello has not actually seen the images that torment him; like Macbeth, he has to kill in order to be rid of them. In Verdi's opera, the hero's last words are marked by a musical repetition of the moment in Act I when he rapturously seals his happiness. 'Un bacio ancora'; one more kiss. It is a redemption that is also a traumatic return of what has been lost. His Desdemona is finally the chaste and pale wife he demands, but only because she is dead.

Verdi was, in other words, as much as any contemporary artist, prepared to test the limits of what we might think of as conventional trauma narratives. He did not simply show characters who were helpless in the face of their horrific pasts, real or imagined, but wanted to explore what it meant for patients to minister to themselves and suffer the disastrous consequences.

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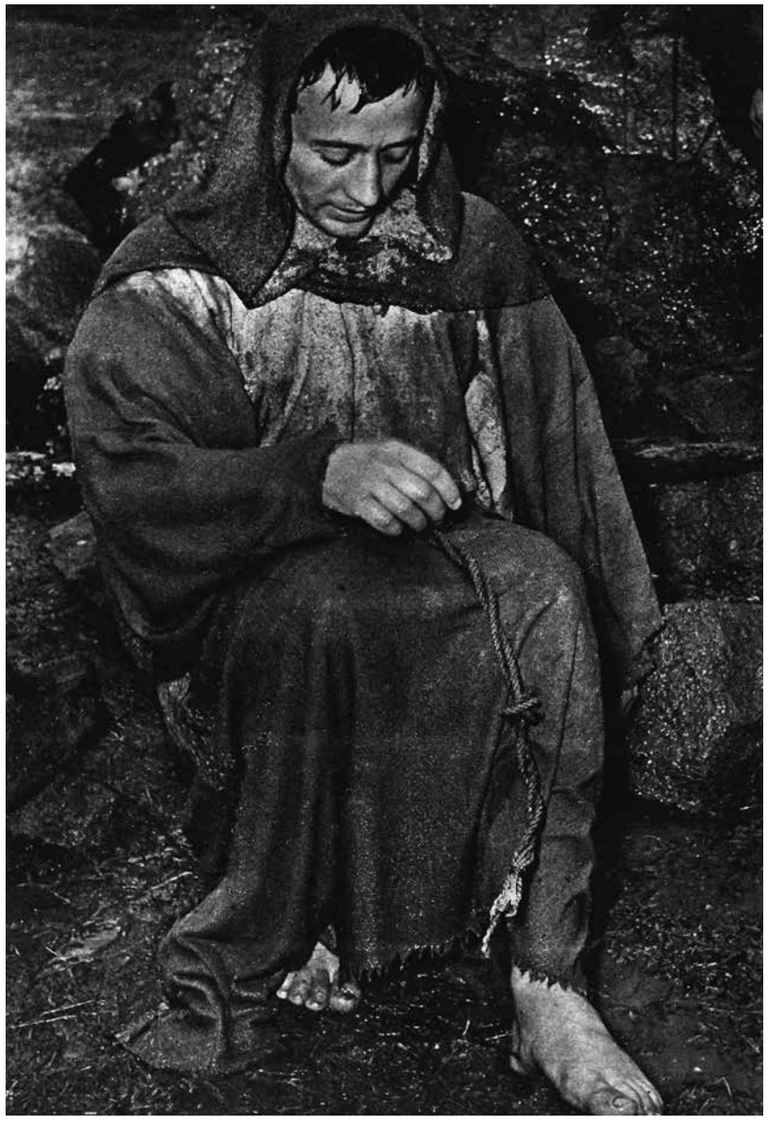

Nazario Gerardi as St Francis in *Francesco, giullare di Dio* (1950, dir. Roberto Rossellini)

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AN OPERA OF IDEAS

Helen M. Greenwald

In 1859, Verdi accomplished two important things: he married Giuseppina Strepponi, his lover of nearly two decades, and he finished *Un ballo in maschera*, bringing to an end what had turned out to be a bitter wrestling match with the censors. He was exhausted and took a hiatus from work until 1861 when Cavour (the future Prime Minister) asked him to run for Parliament; the composer was none too pleased about it. Much to his disappointment, he won the election, and set out for Turin on 18 February.

But Verdi was also house poor; the estate at Sant'Agata was high maintenance and the couple spared no expense in their renovations of it. Thus, when an offer of 60,000 gold francs for a new opera came from St Petersburg, both Verdi and Strepponi were immediately interested. The invitation was still more welcoming because the middle men were friends, the brilliant tenor Enrico Tamberlik, who had sung leading roles in *Ernani*, *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore* and *Un ballo in maschera*, and Mauro Corticelli, then secretary to actress Adelaide Ristori, one of the 'Italian Shakespeareans'. Strepponi knew well that her husband fared better with a project in hand, even in a climate as forbidding as that of St Petersburg; she responded to Corticelli:

> However poor an advocate I may be, I shall gather together... the shreds of my eloquence to try to persuade him to expose his nose to the danger of freezing in Russia... . Quite perfect tagliatelli and maccheroni will be needed to keep him in good humour amid the ice and the furs.

Verdi agreed, and ultimately settled on the Spanish play *Don Álvaro o la fuerza de sino* with Francesco Maria Piave as librettist. The opera had its premiere in St Petersburg on 10 November 1862. Critics praised the work effusively, but sometimes hesitated about its length or fulminated over the body count at the end (which included Alvaro's suicidal leap off a cliff). One critical response to the 1863 Madrid premiere did not hold back: '[T]here would have been more applause had the public not been so displeased by the sight of so many dead people on stage, a true slaughter.' The jibes continued well after the premiere, notably in the 1 July 1867 review in the *The Musical Times*, which likened the opera to pulp fiction:

> Verdi deliberately chooses revolting subjects, because it is only these that his unreal effects can be fitly wedded to... we have no desire to follow in detail the musical illustrations of a story such as we usually find in the penny 'sensation' romances which pass for literature with romantic housemaids.

Verdi addressed both issues soon after the Russian and European premieres in his letter of 14 May 1863 to Tito Ricordi: 'They say [it] is too long, and that the public is frightened by so many deaths! Agreed; but once the subject is admitted, how is one to find another dénouement?' He took six long years to think about it, and was finally moved to complete a revision under pressure from Ricordi, who wanted to mount the opera at La Scala. A number of modifications were made; a Sinfonia replaced the

Silvana Mangano in *Riso amaro* (1949, dir. Giuseppe De Santis) ©akg-images/Interfoto

Sandra Milo (Vanina Vanini) and Laurent Terzieff (Pietro Missirilli) in *Vanina Vanini* (1961, dir. Roberto Rossellini) © Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

original Prelude and scenes were moved around, especially in Act III. The most radical change was a new ending, a considerably toned down Terzetto Finale in which both Carlo and Leonora are stabbed offstage; the curtain falls as Leonora dies in Alvaro's arms. The new version was first performed on 27 February 1869 at La Scala.

Two enduring criticisms of the opera still remained, as Julian Budden observed: 'Lack of organic unity and a discrepancy between the comic and serious elements.' But Verdi was not amenable to altering those aspects of his work and even refused a request from Ricordi to eliminate Fra Melitone, the most apparently superfluous role. Insight on Verdi's thinking reveals itself in the composer's letter to French publisher Léon Escudier of 20 August 1861 in which he called the Rivas play 'powerful, singular, and truly *vast*... something quite out of the ordinary [emphasis added].' It was an opera of 'ideas.' What resulted in Piave's reduction was also a sprawling tale of love, revenge and family honour, made even longer by the addition of a scene from Schiller's *Wallensteins Lager*. The libretto was less a drama and more a novel, in which the author could abruptly switch locations and point of view. The Aristotelian unities of action, time and place were completely ignored, as the story unfolds over years, not days or hours. Piave, in a comment in the 1862 production book, described the time frame in precise terms: 'About 18 months pass between the first and second acts; several years between the second and the third; more than five years between the third and the fourth. The artists should take care not to forget this when they make themselves up.'

The action takes place in Spain and Italy with numerous scene changes, from the Calatrava home in Seville to a steep mountainside near Hornachuelos. In addition to the three leads there are accessory characters of varying importance: Preziosilla, Padre Guardiano, Fra Melitone, the Alcalde (the mayor) and the muleteer/peddler Trabuco. Add to the list a startling number of nameless participants: inn-servants, beggars, monks, soldiers, orderlies, camp followers, peasants, youths, drummers, trumpeters, merchants and even a circus troupe. The critic from the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* noted that there were at least 250 people on stage, with production costs of 232,000 francs.

There are two distinct *tinte* (colours) in *Forza*, the private – music of a more lyrical and intimate nature – and the public, 'outdoor' music, employing louder instruments (drums, trombones etc.) that frequently underscore physical movement. It's possible to think of the corresponding groups of characters as 'Outsiders' as opposed to those who can function 'outside', manifested by popular music: songs and dances, a ballata, a tarantella, a rataplan and more, performed by citizens of the ordinary world from which Leonora and Alvaro have been driven. A good example of the public sphere takes place as the curtain rises on Act II at an inn at a crossroads: a *Coro Ballabile* (dancing chorus) is introduced by six unison chords in a repurposing of the opening measures of the Sinfonia. Workers, soldiers, peasants, travellers and students celebrate the close of the work week with wine and a seguidilla; spirits intensify with the appearance of the Gypsy girl Preziosilla, who enters, dancing. She proposes a toast to Spanish soldiers fighting the enemy on Italian soil, a strophic song, 'Al suon del tamburo' (To the sound of the drum) with a choral refrain, 'È bella la guerra! Evviva!' (War is beautiful! Evviva!). The cadence is militaristic, and, not surprisingly, held together by a drum. A group of travelling pilgrims inspires a 'Preghiera' (Prayer), while the scene closes with a reprise of the dance.

The serious or 'private' world unfolds in a series of confrontations (duets) or intimate reflections (solos). Both of Leonora's arias, for example, are acts of prayer. In Act II, when she arrives at the entrance to the mountainside Church of Our Lady of Angels, she falls on her knees and begs the Virgin for mercy ('Madre, pietosa Vergine'). Flute and clarinet play a sorrowful repeated figure (*sotto voce come lamentoso* –muted, like a lament) while the strings counter it with an urgent pattern of semiquavers. A sudden change to hushed tremolos italicizes Leonora's long lyrical plea not to be forsaken. The companion piece to this aria is Leonora's final entreaty for peace in Act IV, articulated in her unaccompanied sighs of 'Pace, pace.'

The most important concerted piece, which joins the public and private worlds, is the finale of Act II, in which Padre Guardiano accepts Leonora into the monastery and demands an oath of silence from the monks. An organ, representing the institution of the church, introduces the induction ritual, and the scene intensifies over a steady triplet figure in the strings, as custom dissolves into covert: Guardiano threatens a curse on those who would reveal Leonora's secret abode. The most furious moments in the music hint at the *Messa da Requiem* yet to come.

A third colour is the orchestra, which articulates the opera's most important themes, first in the Sinfonia.

The music begins with a unison brass and bassoon invocation, leading to the *allegro agitato* 'fate' motif: three semiquavers rising stepwise to a quaver that falls back a half step. Its galloping urgency evokes the piano figuration of Schubert's *Erlkönig*, and is similarly an undercurrent throughout the opera, almost always linked to Leonora. Its final return introduces Leonora's 'Pace, pace, mio Dio,' which Verdi titled *melodia*, a unique term in his output, its meaning elusive. A pale and worn Leonora expresses her suffering and guilt over the love she still bears for Alvaro. The beauty of the vocal line underscored by harp arpeggiations evoked for the eminent critic Filippo Filippi yet another work of Schubert, his *Ave Maria*. The comment irked the easily irritated Verdi, whose response on 4 March 1869 belies the 'vast' musical range of *La forza del destino*:

> In my consummate ignorance I really could not say how many years have passed since I heard Schubert's *Ave*; so to imitate it would have been difficult for me. Do not imagine when I talk of 'consummate musical ignorance' that I am joking; it is absolutely true. In my house there is hardly any music; I am familiar with some of the best contemporary operas not from having read them but from having heard them in the theatre. In all this there is a definite policy as you will doubtless realize. I repeat that of all composers past and present I am the least erudite... I refer to erudition, not musical knowledge. In that respect I should lie if I said that I had not studied hard and thoroughly in my youth. Indeed it is for this reason that I have a hand strong enough to bend the notes to my will.

—Helen M. Greenwald is the author of numerous scholarly articles on vocal music from the 18th to the 20th centuries, the editor of critical editions of Verdi's *Attila* (Ricordi/University of Chicago Press) and Rossini's *Zelmira* (Fondazione Rossini) as well as the convener and editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Opera* (Oxford University Press). She has also written program essays for an international array of arts institutions, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, La Scala (Milan), The Teatro Regio (Parma), Gran Teatre del Liceu (Barcelona), Maggio Musicale (Florence), and the Metropolitan Opera (New York).

A scene from *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960, dir. Luchino Visconti)

Veronica Simeoni and the Royal Opera House chorus in *La forza del destino* ©2019 ROH.
Photographed by Bill Cooper

BIOGRAPHIES

MARK ELDER Conductor

He is Music Director of the Hallé Orchestra and is the former Artistic Director of Opera Rara (2012–19) and former Music Director of ENO (1979–93). He made his Royal Opera debut in 1976; recent engagements include *Aida*, *Peter Grimes*, *L'Ange de Nisida* in concert, *L'Étoile*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Wozzeck*, *La bohème*, *The Tsar's Bride*, *Fidelio* and *Adriana Lecouvreur*. Recent operatic engagements elsewhere include *Le prophète* (Aix-en-Provence Festival), *Samson et Dalila* and *Rusalka* (Metropolitan Opera), *Carmen* and *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Paris Opera) and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (San Francisco Opera). He has recorded with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, The Hallé, LPO, CBSO, BBC SO, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Opera Rara. In 2006 he was named Conductor of the Year by the Royal Philharmonic Society. He was made a CBE in 1989, knighted in 2008 and made a Companion of Honour in 2017.

CHRISTOF LOY Director

Loy studied music theatre direction in Essen and literature in Munich. He was named Director of the Year by *Opernwelt* (2003, 2004 and 2008), Director of the Year at the 2017 International Opera Awards and earned *Opernwelt*'s Production of the Year 2021/22 for his Oper Frankfurt staging of *Die Nacht vor Weihnachten*. For The Royal Opera he has directed *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Lulu* and *Tristan und Isolde*. Recent productions elsewhere include *Il trittico* at the Salzburg Festival, *Salome* in Helsinki and *Der Schatzgräber* at Deutsche Oper Berlin. Additional notable productions include *Don Pasquale* (Zurich), *Eugene Onegin* (Oslo), *Der ferne Klang* and *Fedora* (Royal Swedish Opera), *Capriccio* and *Rusalka* (Teatro Real, Madrid), *Tannhäuser* and *Königskinder* (Dutch National Opera), *Tosca* (Helsinki) and *Norma* (Frankfurt). Choreography work includes *Eine Winterreise* and *The Miraculous Mandarin/Bluebeard's Castle* for Theater Basel. He returns to The Royal Opera later in the 2023/24 Season for a new production of *Elektra*.

GEORG ZLABINGER Associate Director

Georg Zlabinger studied Comparative Literature Studies at the University of Vienna. Since 2014, he has been staff director at Theater an der Wien, where he has collaborated with directors including Keith Warner, Torsten Fischer, Tatjana Gürbaca, Roland Geyer and Jonathan Meese. He has worked at Wiener Festwochen, Bregenz Festival, Salzburg Festival, Dutch National Opera, Finnish National Opera and Teatro Real. In recent years he has developed a close artistic relationship with Christof Loy: as associate director he was worked on revivals of *Peter Grimes* (Theater an der Wien) and *Tosca* (English National Opera) and in 2021, he staged a new production of *Luisa Miller* for the Glyndebourne Festival, based on an original concept by Loy. Additional directing credits include *Il Giasone*, *The Lighthouse*, *Don Giovanni*, *Last Minute* (Theater an der Wien/Kammeroper), *Bluebeard's Castle* (Konzerthaus Vienna, Konserthuset Gothenburg), *Le nozze di Figaro* (Folkwang University, Essen), *Eugene Onegin* (Theater Bielefeld) and *Luisa Miller* (Cologne Opera). In the 2023/24 Season, he will direct *The Black Mask* with National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra and *Káťa Kabanová* (Theater Bielefeld).

CHRISTIAN SCHMIDT Designer

Born in Christian Coburg in 1966, Schmidt studied set and costume design at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna. Since 1992 he has worked regularly with director Claus Guth, for whom designs include *Der fliegende Holländer* (Bayreuth Festival), *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Hamburg State Opera), *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (La Scala, ROH) and the Mozart-Da Ponte operas and *Fidelio* (Salzburg Festival). He has also worked with Christof Loy (*La forza del destino*, Dutch National Opera; *Tosca*, Finnish National Opera), Shirin Neshat (*Aida*, Salzburg Festival), Hans Neuenfels and Andreas Homoki. He was named Set Designer of the Year (2003) and Costume Designer of the Year (2005, 2012) by *Opernwelt* and nominated as Designer of the Year at the 2017 International Opera Awards.

OLAF WINTER Lighting Designer

Winter studied music and literature in Germany and lighting design at the Studio and Forum of Stage Design, New York. He was resident lighting designer for William Forsythe's Ballet Frankfurt and held the position of Technical Director for both Oper Frankfurt and Schauspiel Frankfurt. He has worked for opera companies and festivals worldwide, including at the Salzburg and Aix-en-Provence festivals. Recent engagements include *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Salzburg Festival), *Don Giovanni* (Paris Opera, Bastille) and *Eugene Onegin* (Liceu, Barcelona). His plans include *Guercœur* for Opera du Rhin, Strasbourg and *Mitridate, re di Ponto* for Teatro Real, Madrid.

OTTO PICHLER Choreographer

Austrian choreographer and director Otto Pichler made his Royal Opera debut in 2016 as choreographer for Barrie Kosky's *The Nose*. He has worked with directors including Günter Krämer, Nicolas Brieger, Christof Loy, David Mouchtar-Samorai, Stathis Livathinos and Bernd Mottl, and has choreographed for opera companies in Paris (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*), Amsterdam (*La forza del destino*), Dresden (*Penthesilea*, *Die Fledermaus*), Cologne (*War and Peace*, *Turandot*), Hanover (*Anatevka*, *My Fair Lady*), Brussels (*Aida*) and for the Salzburg Festival (*Mitridate, re di Ponto*). For Kosky he has also created choreography for *Saul* (Glyndebourne Festival), *The Fiery Angel* (Bavarian State Opera), *Das Rheingold* (Hanover), *Carmen* (Frankfurt, ROH) and *Candide*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *L'Orfeo*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Ball im Savoy*, *La Belle Hélène* and *West Side Story*, which he also co-directed (Komische Oper Berlin). His directing credits include *Hello Dolly!*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The Gypsy Princess*, *Märchen im Grand Hotel* and *The Merry Widow*. Plans include choreography for *Chicago* (Komische Oper Berlin).

KLEVIS ELMAZAJ Revival Choreographer

Albanian choreographer Klevis Elmazaj works regularly with international dance companies on opera, film and musical theatre. His work has appeared worldwide and has earned many awards, including the Burgos/New York International Choreographic Competition, the Belgrade Choreographic Competition Selection and Finalist prize at YAGP New York. While training at the Rambert School in London, he expanded his body language to include modern contemporary styles to his training in ballet, hip-hop, jazz and acrobatics. He has danced for many choreographers and appeared in Great Britain, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Taiwan, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Kuwait. Recent opera projects have included *Eugene Onegin* in Lubeck, directed by Julia Burbach, *Salome* at Finnish National Opera, directed by Christof Loy, Christmas Eve at Oper Frankfurt and *Rusalka* at Teatro Real, Madrid.

KLAUS BERTISCH Dramaturg

German dramaturg Klaus Bertisch studied English and German language and literature, theory of education and art education in Frankfurt. He was Head of Dramaturgy for Dutch National Opera 1990–2018. He has collaborated with directors including Pierre Audi, Willy Decker, Dale Duesing, Christof Loy and Floris Visser and has worked for opera companies including Liceu, Barcelona, La Monnaie, Brussels, Teatro Real, Madrid, Berlin State Opera, Bolshoi Opera and Semperoper Dresden, and for the Salzburg Festival. He has directed *Die lustige Witwe* and *The Gambler* (Amsterdam Concertgebouw) and has staged recitals. He has also taught at the International Opera Studio Nederland, lectured in theatre studies at the University of Amsterdam and has published widely.

WILLIAM SPAULDING Chorus Director

Born in Washington D.C., he studied at the University of Maryland and the Vienna Hochschule, and was appointed Associate Chorus Master at Vienna Volksoper in 1997. He went on to become Principal Chorus Master of the Liceu, Barcelona, and from 2007 to 2016 was Chorus Director at Deutsche Oper Berlin, where he was also appointed Kapellmeister in 2012. He and the Chorus were awarded 'Chorus of the Year' by Opernwelt three years in a row (2008–10), and the 2012 European Chorus Prize from the Foundation 'Pro Europa'. He has also conducted *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Nabucco*, Verdi's Requiem and *Carmen* (Deutsche Oper Berlin). He joined The Royal Opera as Chorus Director of the Royal Opera Chorus in September 2016 and in this role has moderated and presented several Insights events and was conductor for the short film *ROH Unlocked*. He has been Guest Chorus Master at the London Symphony Chorus since 2019.

SERGEY LEVITIN Concert Master

Born in Russia, he studied at St Petersburg State Conservatory and the Conservatory for Music and Performing Arts, Vienna. In 1996 he was appointed Concert Master for the Kirov Orchestra at the Mariinsky Theatre by Valery Gergiev. He has appeared as a guest leader with the LSO, BBC SO, LPO, Philharmonia, RPO, WDR SO, Cologne, and Tonhalle Orchestra, Zurich. As a soloist he has performed at the Usher Hall, the White Nights, Edinburgh and Cortona festivals and throughout Russia, Europe and the USA under conductors including Gergiev, Pappano and Noseda. He has won several awards in Italy and Spain and was a member of the Hermitage String Trio. He has recorded the world premieres of several violin concertos with the Royal Northern Sinfonia under Martin Yates (Dutton Epoch). He joined the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House as Associate Concert Master in 2003, was made Co-Concert Master in 2009 and Concert Master in 2018.

VASILISA BERZHANSKAYA Preziosilla

Born in Russia, Vasilisa Berzhanskaya is a graduate of the Russian Gnesin Academy of Music in Moscow and a former member of the Youth Opera Program at the Bolshoi Theatre. Engagements include *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Vienna State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Mikhailovsky Theatre, Novosibirsk), *L'italiana in Algeri* (Verona), *La cenerentola* (Rome, Basel), *Il viaggio a Reims* (Rossini Opera Festival, Deutsche Oper Berlin), *Moïse et Pharaon* (Pesaro), *I Capuletti e i Montecchi* (Rome) and *Nabucco* (Deutsche Oper Berlin). She has worked with conductors including Zubin Mehta, Mariss Jansons, Daniele Gatti, Vladimir Jurowski and Michele Mariotti. Awards include laureate of the Elena Obraztsova International Competition of Chamber Music, Grand Prix at the Muslim Magomaev International Competition, First Prize and Audience Prize at the Debut Classical Singing Competition (Germany), Audience Prize at Viotti Singing Competition and Best Young Singer at the International Opera Awards (2020). Future engagements include *Maometto II* (Naples), *Anna Bolena* (Berlin), *La Cenerentola* (Chicago, Vienna) and *Carmen* (ROH, Vienna).

CARLO BOSI Mastro Trabuco

Born in Italy, Carlo Bosi sings regularly at opera houses there, including La Scala, Opera di Firenze, Arena di Verona and Maggio Musicale, Florence, and for European houses including those of Amsterdam, Paris and Monte Carlo. Notable appearances include Dr Caius (La Scala, Florence, DNO, ROH), Goro (ROH, Paris Opera), Abbé de Chazeuil in *Adriana Lecouvreur* and Nick in *La fanciulla del West* (Metropolitan Opera), The Incredible in *Andrea Chénier*, Tinca in *Il tabarro* and Gherardo in *Gianni Schicchi* (ROH), Matro Trabuco (DNO), Le Remendado in *Carmen* (Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, Arena di Verona, Teatro Regio, Turin), Nick, Mozart's Don Basilio and Emperor Altoum and Pong in *Turandot* (La Scala, Milan), Poisson in *Adriana Lecouvreur* (Paris Opera) and Spoletta in *Tosca* (Paris Opera, Florence, Milan). Plans include Emperor Altoum (Paris Opera, Metropolitan Opera) and Mastro Trabuco (Metropolitan Opera).

JAMES CRESWELL Marquis of Calatrava

Originally from Seattle, James Creswell graduated from Yale. He began his career with apprenticeships at Los Angeles Opera and San Francisco Opera, before joining Komische Oper Berlin as a soloist. 2022/23 Season highlights included Bartolo (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Marquis of Calatrava for Paris Opera, Fafner (*Das Rheingold*) for English National Opera, Vodník (*Rusalka*) and Caronte (*L'Orfeo*) for Santa Fe Opera and Gurre-Lieder with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. His repertoire includes The Dutchman, Daland, King Marke, Pogner, Gurnemanz, Titurel, Achilla, Zoroastro, Figaro, Commendatore, Leporello, Sarastro, Rocco, Don Fernando, Basilio, Raimondo, Ferrando, Frère Laurent, Capulet, Gremin, Seneca, Escamillo, Des Grieux and Timur. He has performed for the Metropolitan Opera, Dutch National Opera, Teatro Real, Madrid, Bilbao Opera, Berlin State Opera, Oper Frankfurt, Theater an der Wien, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera, Ravinia Festival and Bergen International Festival. Plans include returns to the Metropolitan Opera (*The Magic Flute*) and ENO (*The Handmaid's Tale*).

CHANÁE CURTIS Curra

American soprano Chanáe Curtis is a graduate of the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and The Manhattan School of Music. She is a recipient of the Catherine Filene Shouse Career Grant. Notable engagements include Alice Ford in *Falstaff* (Opera San Jose); Violetta Valéry in *La traviata* and Léontine in *L'amant Anonyme* (Wolf Trap Opera); Countess Ceprano in *Rigoletto*, 2nd Pit Singer in *Hamlet* and Annie in *Porgy and Bess* (Metropolitan Opera); Nedda in *Pagliacci* (Opera Memphis); Nurse/ Girlfriend 1 in *Blue* (ENO); and Bridget/Emelda in *Migrations* and Anna Gomez in *The Consul* (Welsh National Opera). Concert highlights include Mahler's Symphony no.4 with L'Orchestre National de Bretagne under Grant Llewelyn, a performance of Strauss' Four Last Songs at St. David's Hall and a guest appearance at Buckingham Palace. Recordings include an original sound-work for an exhibition celebrating the life and work of artist Gwen John.

ETIENNE DUPUIS Don Carlo di Vargas

French-Canadian baritone Etienne Dupuis was born in Montreal. He made his Royal Opera debut as Marcello (*La bohème*) in 2018. For Deutsche Oper Berlin, his many roles include Hérode (*Hérodiade*), Posa, Giorgio Germont, Zurga (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*), Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Renato (*Un ballo in maschera*) and Eugene Onegin. Recent engagements include Zurga at Zurich Opera, Eugene Onegin, Marcello and Valentin at Vienna State Opera, Escamillo, Count di Luna and Don Giovanni at Paris Opera, Rodrigue (*Don Carlos*) at the Metropolitan Opera and Don Giovanni in San Francisco. Future engagements include Rigoletto at Teatro Real, Madrid, Paolo (*Simon Boccanegra*) and Sancho (*Don Quichotte*) at Paris Opera, Karl Gustav (*La Reine Garcon*) at Opéra de Montréal and Marcello in Lille and with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. He was made a Chevalier de l'ordre des arts et des lettres de la république de France in 2021.

THOMAS D HOPKINSON Alcalde

Originally from Nottingham, Hopkinson is a recent alumnus of The National Opera Studio supported by the Sybil Tutton Award, and studied at the RNCM. Previous roles include 4th Baron (*Lohengrin*), Sciarrone (*Tosca*) and Second Armoured Man (*Die Zauberflöte*) for The Royal Opera, Zuniga (*Carmen*) for Scottish Opera and Opera North, The Mourner (*Fantasio*) and Second Prisoner (*Fidelio*) for Garsington Opera, Monterone (*Rigoletto*), Batone (*L'inganno felice*), The Caliph Mahadi (*The Veiled Prophet*) and Kaboul (*Lalla-Roukh*) for Wexford Festival Opera, Marchese d'Obigny (*La traviata*) for the Al Bustan Festival, Mathieu (*Andrea Chénier*) for The Chelsea Opera Group, Prince Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*) and Il Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) for Opera on Location, Don John (*Much Ado About Nothing*) for Northern Opera Group, Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Dr Grenvil (*La traviata*) for Westminster Opera Company. Future engagements include Count Horn (*Un ballo in maschera*) for Chelsea Opera Group, Dr Grenvil for Scottish Opera and Zelieck (*Lurline*) for The National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland.

ALEKSEI ISAEV Don Carlo di Vargas

Russian baritone Aleksei Isaev graduated from the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music. He made his professional debut in the title role of *Eugene Onegin* at the Helikon Opera, returning later for Scarpia (*Tosca*) and Amonasro (*Aida*). Roles elsewhere have included Renato (*Un ballo in maschera*), Germont (*La traviata*), Nabucco and Iago (*Otello*) with the Moscow Philharmonic; Count di Luna (*Il trovatore*) for the Mariinsky Theatre and Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden (also Iago); Mazepa for Theater an der Wien (also Robert in *Iolanta*); Vodník (*Rusalka*) for The Royal Opera and Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse; Enrico Ashton (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) for Semperoper Dresden; Onegin in Bari; the title role of *The Demon* in Bordeaux; Scarpia in Kazan; Count Igor in Ufa; Germont in Helsinki; Gryaznoy (*The Tsar's Bride*) in Tallinn; and Renato and Escamillo (*Carmen*) in Bangkok. Awards include the 'Brilliant start in art' award from the Elena Obraztsova foundation. Plans include Scarpia (ROH), Iago (Dresden), Don Pizarro (Dijon Opera) and Conte di Luna (Staatsoper Hamburg).

BRIAN JAGDE Don Alvaro

American tenor Brian Jagde is an alumnus of San Francisco Opera's Adler and Merola Fellowship Programs. Operatic appearances have included the title role of *Don Carlo* (The Royal Opera), Don José (The Royal Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Deutsche Oper Berlin, San Francisco Opera, Arena di Verona), Mario Cavaradossi (Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, Lyric Opera of Chicago, SFO, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Zurich Opera), Calaf (SFO, Bayerische Staatsoper), Pinkerton (ROH, LOC, Metropolitan Opera), Maurizio in *Adriana Lecouvreur* (ROH), Stranger in *Das Wunder der Heliane* (Deutsche Oper Berlin), Radamès (SFO, Seattle Opera), Don Alvaro (Paris Opera), Enzo Grimaldo in *La Gioconda* (Liceu, Barcelona), Turiddu in *Cavalleria rusticana* (Dutch National Opera), Canio in *Pagliacci* (Teatro dell'Opera di Roma), Samson (Staatsoper Berlin, Naples) and Des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut* (SFO). Awards include Second Prize in Operalia and the Birgit Nilsson Prize (2012).

DAWID KIMBERG Surgeon

Born in South Africa, he trained at the RCM, the National Opera Studio. He was a Jette Parker Young Artist for The Royal Opera 2009–11, singing roles including Steersman (*Tristan und Isolde*), Potapitch (*The Gambler*), Moralès (*Carmen*) and Marullo (*Rigoletto*). He returned in 2014 as Masetto. His other appearances have included Leuthold in *Guillaume Tell* with the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia and Pappano (recorded for EMI), Doctor Falke in *Die Fledermaus* (Bolshoi), Guglielmo (Opera Holland Park), Count Almaviva (Glyndebourne on Tour), Count Almaviva and Marco in *Gianni Schicchi* (English Touring Opera), Owen Wingrave and Mr Gedge in *Albert Herring* (Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse) and Ned Keene in *Peter Grimes* (Deutsche Oper am Rhein). He joined the Royal Opera Chorus in 2019.

RODION POGOSSOV Fra Melitone

Baritone Rodion Pogossov is a former member of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. Roles there have included Guglielmo, Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Papageno and Silvio (*Pagliacci*). Engagements elsewhere include Figaro (Bayerische Staatsoper, Los Angeles, Santiago, Hamburg State Opera), Papageno and Marcello (Cincinnati), Don Giovanni (Klagenfurt), Count di Luna (Graz), Silvio (Oslo), Posa and Valentin (Hamburg), Don Giovanni (Ópera de Oviedo), Guglielmo (Spoleto Festival), Guglielmo and Belcore (Glyndebourne Festival), Lescaut (Bayerische Staatsoper), Raimbaud in *Le comte Ory* (Seattle), Marcello (The Royal Opera) and Jaroslav Prus in *The Makropulos Affair* (Malmö Opera). He has performed in concert with the Oslo PO, RLPO and LPO and at Carnegie Hall, and has given recitals worldwide. Recordings include a recital disc for EMI, Rachmaninoff songs for Delphian and *Adelson e Salvini* for Opera Rara. Plans include *La bohème* (Metropolitan Opera) and a recital at Wigmore Hall.

SONDRA RADVANOVSKY Donna Leonora

American-Canadian soprano Sondra Radvanovsky has appeared at opera companies worldwide. For The Royal Opera she has sung Roxane (*Cyrano de Bergerac*), Lina (*Stiffelio*), Leonora (*Il trovatore*) and the title roles of *Tosca* and *Manon Lescaut*. She is a regular guest at the Metropolitan Opera, where recent engagements include Floria Tosca, Aida, Amelia (*Un ballo in maschera*), Norma, Elisabetta (*Roberto Devereux*), Maria Stuarda and Anna Bolena. Recent appearances elsewhere include Luisa Miller and Maddalena di Coigny (Liceu, Barcelona), Floria Tosca (Vienna State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Los Angeles Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper), Elisabetta (San Francisco Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper), Leonora and Aida (Paris Opera), Amelia (Paris Opera, Zurich Opera) and Norma (Lyric Opera of Chicago, Bayerische Staatsoper). Recordings include Verdi scenes with Dmitri Hvorostovsky and a solo disc of Verdi arias.

EVGENY STAVINSKY Padre Guardiano

Russian bass Evgeny Stavinsky is an ensemble member of Novaya Opera, where roles have included Thoas (*Iphigénie en Tauride*), Ruslan (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*), Pimen (*Boris Godunov*), Prince Gremin (*Eugene Onegin*), Malyuta-Skuratov (*The Tsar's Bride*), Prince of Galich (*Prince Igor*), Méphistophélès (*Faust*), King Heinrich (*Lohengrin*), King Marke (*Tristan und Isolde*) and La Roche (*Capriccio*). Appearances elsewhere include Monk in *L'Ange de Nisida* (ROH concert), Zaccaria in *Nabucco* (Ravenna, Ferrara, Nice, Toulon), Colline in *La bohème*, Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Teatro Comunale, Bologna), Padre Guardiano (Theater Basel), Prince Ivan Khovansky in *Khovanshchina* (Budapest), Oroveso in *Norma* (Teatro Massimo, Palermo), Timur in *Turandot* (Palm Beach Opera), Doctor Bartolo (Vienna Konzerthaus, Lucerne Festival), Don Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Maggio Musicale, Florence) and Count Walter in *Luisa Miller* (Glyndebourne Festival). Concert work includes Beethoven's Symphony no.9 (Athens, Ravenna), Mozart's Requiem (Baden-Baden, Paris, Moscow, St Petersburg) and Verdi's Requiem (Berlin Philharmonic, New York). Plans include *Guillaume Tell* (La Scala, Milan) and *Rusalka* (Liège).