

Telling Tales: *External Narratives in Opera*



Art Axelrod



The Opera Guild of Rochester

Address:

Opera Guild of Rochester
P.O. Box 92245
Rochester, NY 14692

Guild Email:

guild@operarochester.org

Opera Guild Website:

www.operaguildofrochester.org

Guild Contacts:

Dr. Agneta Borgstedt, President – (585) 334-2323
Art Axelrod, Vice President – (585) 377-6133
Helga Strasser, Trip Coordinator – (585) 586-2274

External Narrative Scenes

- ◆ Ordinarily, each scene in an opera depicts the flow of the drama within the opera.
- ◆ But sometimes the scene may show a character relating events that occur outside the plot of the opera.
 - We'll call those "External Narratives".
- ◆ Examples of those are our subject for this evening.

September 2012

Opera Guild of Rochester

3

Why External Narratives?

- ◆ Tell a part of the story that occurs offstage or before the curtain rises.
- ◆ Provide a character's point of view.
- ◆ Illustrate the character's nature or personality.
- ◆ Foreshadow an event within the plot.
- ◆ Provide local color (as if part of the scenery.)
- ◆ It's good theater.

September 2012

Opera Guild of Rochester

4

Our Examples This Evening

1. Song of the Indian Guest from *Sadko*
2. Senta's Aria from *The Flying Dutchman*
3. Princess Eboli's "Veil Song" from *Don Carlo*
4. Ferrando's Aria from *Il Trovatore*
5. Azucena's Aria from *Il Trovatore*
6. Lucia's Ghost Story from *Lucia di Lammermoor*

September 2012

Opera Guild of Rochester

5

Examples, continued

7. Turandot's "In questia regia" from *Turandot*
8. Lisa's Party Scene from *The Queen of Spades*
9. Desdemona's Willow Song from *Otello*
10. "The Siege of Kazan" from *Boris Godunov*

September 2012

Opera Guild of Rochester

6

The Magic Bird of India

The Song of the Indian Merchant from *Sadko*

Gegam Grigorian, The Indian Merchant (t);
Vladimir Galusin, Sadko (t) – 2002

Orchestra, Chorus and Ballet of the Kirov
Opera, Valery Gergiev, cond.

September 2012

Opera Guild of Rochester

7

Sadko

Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, 1844 - 1908

Libretto by the composer and Vladimir
Ivanovich Bel'sky based on an 11th
century Russian folk epic, the *Novgorod
Cycle*.

First Performance, 1898, Moscow

Set in ancient, mythic Russia

September 2012

Opera Guild of Rochester

8

The Song of the Indian Guest

Sadko is a minstrel who aspires to be a merchant. He has obtained magic gold and has outfitted ships and obtained merchandise, but must decide where to sail.

At the inn, there are three foreign guests. Sadko asks each to sing of his country so he can decide which to sail to.

This is the Song of the Indian Guest, who sings of a magic bird that lives on a rock in the sea.

September 2012

Opera Guild of Rochester

9

The Legend of the Flying Dutchman

“Traft ihr das Schiff in Meere an!”
from *The Flying Dutchman*

Hildegard Behrens, Senta (s) – 2002

Orchestra and Chorus of the Savonlinna
 Opera Festival, Finland, Leif
 Segerstam, cond.

September 2012

Opera Guild of Rochester

10

The Flying Dutchman

Richard Wagner, 1813 - 1883

Libretto by the composer, based on an ancient European legend.

First Performance, 1843, Dresden

Set in a fishing village in Norway

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

11

Senta's Aria, "Traft ihr das Schiff in Meere an!"

Senta, the teenage daughter of a Norwegian sea captain. She is obsessed with the legend of the cursed captain of The Flying Dutchman.

Senta and the other girls are spinning.
She sings the legend to the others.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

12

The Veil Song

**"Nei giardin del bello"
from *Don Carlo***

Grace Bumbry (ms), Princess Eboli;
Betsy Norden (s), Tebaldo
1983

Orchestra and Chorus of the Metropolitan Opera,
James Levine, cond.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

13

Don Carlo

Giuseppe Verdi, 1813 - 1901

Italian libretto by Angelo Zanardini, based on
French libretto by Joseph Méry and Camille
du Locle, based on a play by Johan Friedrich
von Schiller.

First Performance, French version, 1867, Paris;
Italian version, 1884, Milan

Set in Spain, c. 1560

The Infante, Don Carlos, rebels against his
father, King Philip II.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

14

The Veil Song

The ladies of the Royal Court of Spain gather in the garden for relaxing leisure.

Princess Eboli, a high-ranking and beautiful Lady, sings a song, accompanied by the Page, Tebaldo (a trouser role).

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

15

He Said . . . She Said . . .

1. Ferrando's Aria, "Di due figlia vivea padre beato"

Jose van Dam (b), Ferrando

2. Azucena's Aria, "Stride la vampa"

Fiorenza Cosotto (ms), Azucena

from *Il Trovatore*

1978

Orchestra and Chorus of the Vienna State Opera, Herbert von Karajan, cond.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

16

Il Trovatore

Giuseppe Verdi, 1814 – 1901

Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano, based on the play *El Trovador* (1836) by Antonio García Gutiérrez.

First Performance, 1853, Rome

Set in Spain, 15th Century

The troubadour, Manrico, son of the Gypsy woman, Azucena, struggles against the evil Count di Luna.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

17

1. Ferrando's Aria

Act 1, Scene 1: Captain of the Count di Luna's Guard relates how the current Duke's infant brother died, presumably after being cursed by a Gypsy woman, who was captured and burnt at the stake. The Gypsy's daughter was complicit and is being sought.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

18

2. Azucena's Aria

Act 2: Azucena is the daughter of the executed Gypsy woman, referred to by Ferrando, and the presumed mother of our hero, Manrico.

At the Gypsy camp, Azucena tells the story of her mother's execution and describes how her last words were a plea for vengeance.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

19

She Saw a Ghost

"Regnava nel silenzio"
from *Lucia de Lammermor*

Anna Netrebko (s), Lucia; Michaela
 Martens (ms), Alisa
 2009

Orchestra and Chorus of the Metropolitan
 Opera, James Levine, cond.

Mary Zimmerman, director

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

20

Lucia di Lammermmor

Gaetano Donizetti, 1797 - 1848

Libretto by Salvatore Cammerano, based on the novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* by Sir Walter Scott, 1819.

First Performance, 1835, Naples

Set in Scotland, 17th Century

Emotionally fragile Lucy Ashton (Lucia) is caught in a feud between her own family and that of her lover's family, the Ravenswoods. Her domineering brother, Henry (Enrico), sends her over the edge of madness.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

21

Regnava nel silenzio

Lucy and her maid, Alice (Alisa) are waiting by a fountain for Lucy's outlawed lover, Edgar (Edgardo) Ravenswood.

Lucy relates to Alice how at this fountain, she encountered the ghost of a young woman murdered by a jealous ancestor.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

22

Avenging Her Ancestress

"In questa regia"

from Turandot

Eva Marton (s), Lucia; Placido Domingo (t), Calaf
1988

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus,
James Levine, cond.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

23

Turandot

Giacomo Puccini (1858 - 1924)

Completed by Franco Alfano (1875 - 1925)

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato
Simoni, based on a play by Carlo Gozzi
(1762).

First Performance, 1826, Milan

Set in Peking, Mythic China

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

24

In questa regia

The Princess Turandot will marry only a man who can answer three riddles. Any suitor who tries and fails the test will be beheaded.

In this aria, Turandot relates how a thousand years ago, an ancestress was raped and murdered by foreign invaders – she sets this test to avenge her.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

25

Russian Art Song

Lisa's Party Scene
from *The Queen of Spades*

Olga Borodina (ms), Polina; Maria
Gulagina (s), Lisa
1992

Kirov Orchestra and Chorus, St. Petersburg,
Valery Gergiev, cond.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

26

The Queen of Spades

Pyotr Iliich Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)

Libretto by Modest Tchaikovsky and the composer, based on a novel by Aleksandr Pushkin (1834).

First Performance, 1890, St. Petersburg
Set in St. Petersburg, late 18th century

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

27

Lisa's Party Scene

Lisa, the heroine of the opera, is to be married to Prince Yeletsky. Her friends throw a party for her. Lisa is depressed because she is infatuated with an officer named Herman.

Her friend, Polina is asked to sing. She first sings a melancholy art song, then, to cheer up Lisa, she sings a Russian folk song.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

28

Desdemona's Willow Song

**"Salce, salce"
from *Otello***

Renée Fleming (s), Desdemona;
Jane Bunnell (ms), Emilia
2002

Orchestra of Metropolitan Opera,
James Levine, cond.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

29

Otello

Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901)

Libretto by Arrigo Boito, after
Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604).

First Performance, 1887, La Scala, Milan
Set in Cyprus, end of 15th century

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

30

Desdemona's Willow Song

Desdemona is devoted to her husband, Otello. However, due to Iago's machinations, he is convinced that she is unfaithful.

Desdemona is getting ready for bed, attended by her maid, Emilia. She has premonitions of danger and sings a sad song.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

31

An Old Soldier's Story

**The Siege of Kazan
from *Boris Godunov***

Arthur Eizen (b), Varlaam – 1987

Orchestra of The Bolshoi Opera, Alexander Lazarev, cond.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

32

Boris Godunov

Modest Mussorgsky (1839 - 1881)

Libretto by the composer, based on a historical drama by Alexander Pushkin.

First Performance, 1874, St. Petersburg, Russia

Set in Tsarist Russia, turn of the 17th century

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

33

The Siege of Kazan

The novice monk, Grigori, has escaped from his monastery, intending to raise an army to overthrow Tsar Boris.

Attempting to leave Russia, he stops at an inn at the Lithuanian border. There, he encounters two other escaped monks, Vaarlam and Missail.

Vaarlam, drunk, sings a rowdy song of his military days with Tsar Ivan the Terrible, when they besieged and conquered the Tatar capital of Kazan.

Opera Guild of Rochester

September 2012

34

Thank You



And Good Night!

September 2012

Opera Guild of Rochester

35

Playlist

Telling Tales

External Narratives in Opera

Art Axelrod

Fall 2012

The Magic Bird

1. Song of the Indian Guest from *Sadko* (4:37)

Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844 - 1908)

Gegam Grigorian (t), Indian Merchant; Vladimir Galusin (t), Sadko – 1994
Orchestra, Chorus and Ballet of The Kirov Opera, Valery Gergiev, cond.
Philips B0006819-09 (DVD, 1994)

The Legend of the Flying Dutchman

2. “Trafft ihr das Schiff im Meere an!” from *The Flying Dutchman* (8:00)

Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883)

Hildegard Behrens (s), Senta – 1989

Orchestra and Chorus of the Savonlinna Opera Festival, Finland, Leif Segerstam, cond.
Video version filmed at Olavinlinna Castle, Finland: Ilkka Bäckman, Director,
Kultur D2252 (DVD, 1989)

The Veil Song

3. The Veil Song, “Nei giardin del bello” from *Don Carlo* (4:34)

Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901)

Grace Bumbry (ms), Princess Eboli; Betsy Norden (s), Tebaldo – 1983
Orchestra and Chorus of the Metropolitan Opera, James Levine, cond.
Deutsche Grammophon B0005076-09 – 2005

He said, She Said . . .

4. Ferrando’s Aria, “Di due figlia vivea padre beato” from *Il Trovatore* (5:31)

Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901)

José van Dam (b), Ferrando; chorus of soldiers – 1978

Orchestra and Chorus of the Vienna State Opera, Herbert von Karajan, cond.
TDK DVUS-CLOPIT (Video DVD, 2004)

5. Azucena’s Aria, “Stride la vampa” from *Il Trovatore* (3:42)

Fiorenza Cosotto (ms), Azucena

She Saw a Ghost

6. “Regnava nel silenzio” from *Lucia de Lammermor* (4:54)

Gaetano Donizetti (1797 - 1848)

Anna Netrebko (s), Lucia; Michaela Martens (ms), Alisa – 2009

Orchestra and Chorus of the Metropolitan Opera, James Levine, cond.
Mary Zimmerman, director
Deutsche Grammophon B0013573-09

Avenging Her Ancestress

7. “In questa regia” from *Turandot* (7:39)

Giacomo Puccini (1858 - 1924)

Eva Marton (s), Lucia; Placido Domingo (t), Calaf – 1988

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus, James Levine, cond.

Deutsche Grammophon B0000852-09

Russian Art Song

8. Lisa’s Party Scene from *The Queen of Spades* (6:21)

Pyotr Iliich Tchaikovski (1840 - 1893)

Olga Borodina (ms), Polina; Maria Gulagina (s), Lisa – 1992

Kirov Orchestra and Chorus, St. Petersburg, Valery Gergiev, cond.

Philips 070 434-9 – 1993

Desdemona’s Willow Song

9. Desdemona’s Willow Song from *Otello* (5:23)

Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901)

Renée Fleming (s), Desdemona; Jane Bunnell (ms), Emilia – 1995

Orchestra of Metropolitan Opera, James Levine, cond.

Deutsche Grammophon B0002107-09 – 2004

An Old Soldier’s Story

10. The Siege of Kazan from *Boris Godunov* (3:06)

Modest Mussorgsky (1839 - 1881)

Arthur Eizen (b), Varlaam – 1987

Orchestra of The Bolshoi Opera, Alexander Lazarev, cond.

Kultur D2852 (DVD, 1987)

TT = 54:12