

# **ABRACADABRA!**

## **Gypsies, Witches and Sorcerers In Opera**

*Chuck Lundeen*



### **The Guild of Mercury Opera Rochester**

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# Definitions

- WITCH: One credited with supernatural powers and special knowledge of evil and how to deal with it.
- GYPSY: In opera gypsies and witches are often interchangeable. One significant gypsy skill is the ability to forecast the future using palm readings or cards.

- Witches, gypsies, and sorcerers have appeared continually in theatrical and musical works since they were first used; they continue up to the present in Broadway musicals, plays, and television.

Dido and Aeneas  
By Henry Purcell  
1689

- Dido is the Queen of Carthage.
- Aeneas is a Trojan War hero who stops in Carthage.
- They marry, but Fate has other plans for Aeneas and uses the witches to bring them about.

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Orphee et Eurydice  
by Christoph W. Gluck  
1764 French Version

- Orphee mourns the loss of his wife, Eurydice.
- Cupid tells him the Gods will allow him to go to Hades to bring his wife back to Earth.
- He must not look at her until they reach Earth.
- Orphee must plead with the FURIES to enter Hades to search for his wife.

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Die Zauberflote  
The Magic Flute by W.A. Mozart  
1791

- In Mozart's final opera he concentrates on the conflict between the powers of good & evil
- SARASTRO represents good/light
- QUEEN OF THE NIGHT, evil/darkness

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MACBETH  
by Giuseppe Verdi  
1847

- Witches predict that MACBETH will eventually become King of Scotland.
- These predictions set the tragic action into motion.

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IL TROVATORE  
by Giuseppe Verdi  
1853

- A Gypsy chorus sings of life and labor.
- Azucena tells of tragic events experienced by her mother and her.

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UN BALLO IN MASCHERA  
A Masked Ball by Giuseppe Verdi  
1859

- Ulrica, a gypsy/witch, has been criminally charged and ordered out of the community.
- The governor goes to see for himself who she is and what she does.

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**CARMEN**  
by Georges Bizet  
1875

- Carmen tells one of her lovers, Don Jose, that their relationship will inevitably end up in death for both of them
- Carmen and her gypsy friends read the cards to predict the future

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**HANSEL UND GRETEL**  
by Engelbert Humperdink  
1893

- The two siblings are lost in a forest and come upon a delightful house all made from sweets
- They discover that the owner of the house isn't nearly as sweet as its exterior!

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# ABRACADABRA: Witches and Gypsies in Opera

Playlist

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1. **DIDO and AENEAS** (1689) by **HENRY PURCELL** (1658-1695)

Kultur Films: A movie filmed on location at Hampton Court Palace, conducted by Richard Hickox and directed by Peter Maniura, 1995, #D4242

Sorceress  
Witches

Sally Burgess  
Collegium Musicum 90

2. **ORPHEE et EURYDICE** (1762,Italian; 1764,French) by **CHRISTOPH W. GLUCK** (1714-1787)

Kultur Films: Live from the Sydney Opera House, conducted by Marco Guidarini and directed by Stefanos Lazaridis, 1993, # D4058

Orphee  
Furies

David Hobson  
Dancers and chorus of The Australian Opera  
and The Meryl Tankard Australian Dance Theatre  
choreographed by Meryl Tankard

3. **DIE ZAUBERFLOTE** (The Magic Flute) 1791 by **W.A. MOZART** (1756-1791)

Deutsche Grammophon: Production designed for The Metropolitan Opera by David Hockney, conducted by James Levine, February 1991, #MS7500

Pamina  
Queen of the Night (her mother)

Kathleen Battle  
Luciana Serra

4. **MACBETH** (1847) by **GIUSEPPE VERDI** ((1813-1901)

Production by the Teatro Regia di Parma conducted by Bruno Bartoletti, June 2006, #DWWW-OPMACPA

Macbeth  
Banquo  
Witches

Leo Nucci  
Enrico Iori  
Chorus of the Teatro Regio di Parma

**5. IL TROVATORE (1853) by GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813 -1901)**

Kultur Films: Production for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden conducted by Carlo Rizzi and directed by Elijah Moshinsky, May, 2002, #D0849

Azucena	Yvonne Naef
Manrico	Jose Cura

**6. UN BALLO in MASCHERA (A Masked Ball) (1859) by GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813-1901)**

Decca: From the Metropolitan Opera conducted by Giuseppe Patane, February, 1980, #0743227

Ulrica	Bianca Berini
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**7. CARMEN (1875) by GEORGES BIZET (1838-1875)**

Decca; Production by Royal Opera House, Covent Garden conducted by Antonio Pappano and directed by Francesca Zambello, 2007, # 0743312

Carmen	Anna Caterina Antonacci
Don Jose	Jonas Kaufmann
Frasquita	Elena Xanthoudakis
Mercedes	Viktorija Vizin

**8. HANSEL UND GRETEL (1893) by ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK( 1854-1921)**

Deutsche Grammophon: A movie made from the opera, directed by August Everding, 1980-81, #B0005760-09

Sir Georg Solti conducting the Wiener Philharmoniker

Hansel	Brigitte Fassbaender
Gretel	Edita Gruberova
Witch	Sena Jurinac