
 **The Guild of Mercury Opera Rochester**

Sleepwalking, Hallucinations and Madness

Altered States in Opera

A Presentation of The Mercury Opera Guild

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 **The Guild of Mercury Opera Rochester**

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 **WE OPEN IN VENICE.....**


La finta pazza

(The fake madwoman)

The first operatic smash hit

Libretto by Giulio Strozzi
Music by Francesco Saccati

Venice, 1641

 **Symptomatology of a mad scene**

"...common elements [with later mad scenes] include

- rapidly shifting subject matter, tone, rhythms, and rhyme patterns;
- frequent exclamations;
- expressions of violence,
 - often in the context of repeated references to war (*bellacosa pazzia*), associated with trumpet imitations, and to Hell, usually marked by the conventional *versi sdruccioli*;
- identification with mythical characters;
- delusions regarding the perversity of nature;
- reference to imaginary physical ailments or danger;
- incursions of abnormal speech –screaming, crying, laughing, singing;
- allusions to dance, and sudden, unexpected requests for songs."

Rosand, p. 350.

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Versi sdruciolli

Verga tiranna ignobile, Recide alti papaveri; Per questo io resto immobile, Fra voi sozzi cadaveri. Il foco mesto ardetemi: Il sepolero apprestatemi: Donne care, piangetemi: Pace all'alma pregatemi.	Tyrannic, ignoble rod cuts down tall poppies: For this I remain stationary among you loathsome corpses. The funeral fire, light for me; Ready my sepulcre: Dear women, weep for me Pray for the peace of my soul.
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Etiology

A mania for madness

Madness as metaphor

Gods, devils and spirits

What humor are you in?

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Orlando, 1733

Italian opera comes to London:
Georg Frederic Handel, 1685-1759

Orlando: career or relationship?
The ingratitude of this woman is
driving me mad!

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Ah, Stigie Larve! Ah scelerati spettri,
Che la perfida donna ora ascondete,
Perche al mio amor offeso
Al mio giusto furor non la rendete?
Ah misero e tradito!
L'Ingrata gia m'ha ucciso;
Sono lo spirito mio da me diviso;
Sono un ombra, e qual'ombra addresso lo voglio
Varcar la giu ne Regni del Cordoglio.

Ecco la Stigia barca.
Di Caronte a dispetto
Gia folco l'onde nere: Ecco di Pluto
Le affumicate Soglie, e l'arfo Tetto.

Gia Iatra Cerbero
E gia dell'Ereba
Ogni terribile
Squallida furia
Sen viene a me.

Recitativo

Aria meter; versi sdruciolli

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Ma la Furie, che fol me die Martoro
 Dov'e? Questa e Medoro,
 A Proserpina in braccio
 Vedo che fugge. Or a strapparla lo corro.
 Ah! Proserpina piange!
 Vien meno il mio furore,
 Se si piange all'Inferno anche d'amore.

} Recitativo

Vaghe pupille, non piangete no.
 Che del pianto ancor nel Regno
 Puo in ognun destar pieta:
 Vaghe pupillae non piangete no.

} Aria meter

Ma si pupillae si piangete si
 Che fordo al vostro incanto
 Ho un Core d'Adamanto,
 Ne calma il mio furor.
 Ma si pupillae si piangete si.

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Madly in Love

The Anatomy of Melancholy

Richard Burton, 1621

A rash of bereaved and deserted women

"Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do."
 Rosalind in As You Like It, by William Shakespeare (3.2.426-427)

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Nina

o sia La pazza per amore 1789

Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816)

Treating the mad humanely
 Speaking truth to power


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The Nineteenth Century

Both scientific and romantic interest in the mind

Crazy about sleepwalking


I Puritani, 1835
 Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835)

 **Did you read the book?**
A bestseller and the opera version

Sir Walter Scott and love-madness


The Bride of Lammermoor, 1819
"So, you have ta'en up your bonny bridegroom?"
(p.338)

Lucia di Lammermoor, 1835
Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)

 **Nabucco** 1842 and **MacBeth** 1847
Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Egomania
The wrath of the gods
Musical reprise
Shock treatment


The power of guilt
Mad ambition
No flutes here
Other guilty parties
Orestes
Margherite
Boris Gudonov

 **Pique Dame**
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, 1890

And now for something completely different...
Obsession and perversity

Act I
An afternoon in the park
"I just can't help myself!"

Act II
A visit to the Countess

 **Pique Dame**, con'd

Act III
Scene i An unexpected visitor

Scene ii A mad scene duet

The Queen of Spades

Hamlet, 1865

Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896)

A melodic gift
Adapting Shakespeare for the Paris Opera
What was the director thinking?
The mad scene

Bibliography

Fleming, Michael and Manvell, Roger, Images of Madness: the Portrayal of Madness in the Feature Film, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Rutherford, NJ, 1985.

Freeman, John W., Stories of the Great Operas, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, NY, 1985.

Holden, Amanda, Ed., The New Penguin Opera Guide, Penguin Books, 2001.

Porter, Roy, Madness, A Brief History, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002.

Ross, Alex, "Unsung: Rediscovering the operas of Francesco Cavalli," The New Yorker, May 25, 2009.

Rosand, Ellen, Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: the Creation of a Genre, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1991

Scher, Steven Paul, Ed., Music and Text: Critical Inquiries, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

Small, Helen, Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1865, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996.

Metropolitan Opera Radio Broadcast Website: www.operainfo.org.

Playlist
Altered States in Opera

1. Orlando, George Frederic Handel

Arthaus Musik, 2008. William Christie, Cond.,
“La Scintilla” Orchestra of the Zurich Opera,
2007.

Orlando: Marijana Mijanovic

2. Nina, Giovanni Paisiello, 1790 revision

Arthaus Musik, Adam Fischer, Cond.,
Chorus and Orchestra of the Zurich Opera,
2002.

Nina: Cecilia Bartoli
The Count: Laslo Polgar
Susanna: Juliette Galstian

3. I Puritani, Vincenzo Bellini

Deutsche Grammophon, Patrick Summers,
Cond.
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus
2007

Elvira: Anna Netrebko
Giorgio: John Relyea

4. Lucia di Lammermoor, Gaetano Donizetti

Video Artists Internatiional, 2007.

Bruno Bartoletti, Cond.

NHK Symphony Orchestra

Tokyo Philharmonic Chorus

1967

Lucia: Renata Scotto

5. Pique Dame, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

RM Arts, Image Entertainment, 1999.

Andrew Davis, Cond.

London Philharmonic, Glyndebourne Chorus,

1992

Herman: Yuri Marusin

Lisa: Nancy Gustafson

6. Hamlet, Ambroise Thomas

EMI Classics, 2004.

Bertrand De Billy, Musical Director

Orchestra and Chorus, Gran Teatre del Liceu

Barcelona, 2004

Ophelie: Natalie Dessay