

# Operatic Recital

Tribute to Cesare Siepi (1923–2010)



Flavio Mathias — Bass



Leonid Maximov — Piano

L'INTER Hall - Porrentruy

Sunday 14 June 2026, 5.00 pm

Duration: approx. 1 hour 30 minutes, including the interval

Private concert · Admission by booking only · Donations welcome · Please ensure your mobile phones and electronic devices are set to silent mode during the concert

# ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

## Flávio Mathias | Bass-baritone

The Swiss-Brazilian bass-baritone Flávio Mathias has built a distinguished career at the intersection of profound scholarly training and international stage performance. Introduced to singing in 1992 in Caracas by the soprano Manuela Velo, he chose to devote his life to music after completing his architecture studies. His education includes the Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart and masterclasses with legendary figures such as Mirella Freni, Nikolai Ghiaurov, and Aldo Baldin. In Europe, he specialized in Early Music at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis under Ulrich Messthaler and the Musik-Akademie Basel, later earning an opera diploma from the Swiss Opera Studio. His vocal refinement continued under the mentorship of masters like László Polgár, Guy Chauvet, Dunja Vejzovic, Margret Honig, Sherman Lowe et Kurt Widmer.

Following a notable debut in Bach's Mass in B minor conducted by Helmuth Rilling, Mathias has graced stages such as the Zurich Opera House, Prague State Opera, and the theaters of Basel and Biel/Solothurn. His extensive repertoire spans from rare Baroque gems to the works of Mozart, Verdi, and Stravinsky. A founding member of the Arosa Opera Festival and a finalist in the Bidu Sayão International Competition, he was a member of the Zurich Opera Chorus from 2005 to 2016, where he also frequently appeared as a

soloist. Since 2016, he has been a permanent member of the Theater Basel Chorus. A versatile lyric artist, Mathias remains deeply committed to the refined tradition and vocal heritage of the great 20th-century bass voices.

## Leonid Maximov | Piano

The pianist Leonid Maximov laid the foundations for his musical career at a young age at a specialist school for talented youngsters. He successfully completed his studies at the Leningrad Conservatoire in 1990. His professional career then took him straight to Finland: from 1990 to 1999, he worked as a répétiteur and conductor at the Finnish National Opera and at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, where he developed an extensive repertoire.

Since 1999, Leonid Maximov has worked as a principal répétiteur at Theater Basel, where he is involved in a wide range of productions, ranging from Baroque music to contemporary works. He performs regularly in concerts and can be seen on European stages as a distinguished chamber music partner and lieder accompanist.

His artistic work is documented in numerous recordings for Hessischer Rundfunk, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and Finnish Radio. Alongside his classical work, he has a great passion for jazz, which lends his playing a particular stylistic depth and flexibility.

## NOTE D'INTRODUCTION

The recital presented this evening is conceived as an act of memory and transmission. It pays tribute to one of the greatest singers of the twentieth century, Cesare Siepi (1923–2010), by recreating the exact programme he performed at the Salzburg Festival on 27 July 1956, accompanied at the piano by Leo Taubman.

This historic concert was neither a “Liederabend” in the strict sense nor a traditional evening of opera arias. It was an emblematic recital, revealing the full diversity of Siepi's art: from French *mélodie* to German Lied, from Baroque aria to the great pages of the Italian repertoire. This freedom of construction, combined with remarkable stylistic coherence, made the programme a model of the vocal recital, engraved in the history of interpretation.

Through this concert, the aim is not imitation, but the reactivation of a spirit: that of a style of singing founded on nobility of line, clarity of diction, expressive depth and respect for style. By bringing this programme back to life seventy years later, this recital invites the audience to rediscover an art of singing that has become a reference today.

## HISTORICAL MILESTONES

Cesare Siepi (1923–2010) was one of the great basses of the twentieth century. Born in Milan and largely self-taught, he quickly established himself as one of the most remarkable bass voices of his time. He made his debut in 1941 in the role of Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*. Opposed to the fascist regime, he took refuge in Switzerland during the Second World War, where his talent was discovered and encouraged.

After the war, his career developed rapidly: in 1945 he triumphed as Zaccaria in *Nabucco* at La Fenice in Venice, and soon afterwards made his debut at La Scala in Milan, where he established himself as one of the great basses of his generation. In 1948, Arturo Toscanini chose him to sing *Mefistofele*, confirming his international renown.

In 1950, he made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in New York as Philip II in *Don Carlo*, inaugurating a collaboration of 23 seasons and becoming the natural successor to Ezio Pinza. There he expanded his repertoire with roles such as Boris Godunov and Gurnemanz (*Parsifal*). At the Salzburg Festival, his Don Giovanni became legendary and remains a reference.

He appeared on the greatest international stages and was also a highly sought-after concert singer. Later, he successfully approached American musical theatre, notably *South Pacific*.

Endowed with aristocratic stage presence and great stylistic elegance, Siepi embodied the true *basso cantante*: noble phrasing, vocal suppleness and refined musicality. He was

admired for the natural beauty of his timbre, the breadth of his breath and an elegance that transcended repertoire boundaries. Though his voice had neither the power of Boris Christoff nor the velvet tone of Ezio Pinza, it captivated through distinction and expressive naturalness. His long career, extending into the 1990s, makes him a major figure in the history of opera.

### Cesare Siepi and the Salzburg Recital (1956)

The recital of 27 July 1956 in Salzburg constitutes a decisive milestone in his discographic career. Recorded live, it reveals an artist at the height of his powers, capable of moving with equal authority from intimate recollection to dramatic intensity, from light irony to the darkest gravity. This programme remains an exemplary testimony of the art of the twentieth-century vocal recital.

CONCERT PROGRAMME INSPIRED BY CESARE SIEPI'S RECITAL AT THE  
SALZBURG FESTIVAL

70th anniversary 1. Liederabend (Recital) · Mozarteum, 27 July (1956–2026)

Jean-Baptiste Lully · (1632 – 1687)

1 Amadis – Bois épais, Act II · Amadis Philippe Quinault

2 Alceste – Il faut passer tôt ou tard, Act IV · Charon Philippe Quinault

Robert Schumann · (1810 – 1856)

3 Du bist wie eine Blume, Op. 25 No. 24 Heinrich Heine

4 Ich grolle nicht, Op. 48 No. 7 Heinrich Heine

Johannes Brahms · (1833 – 1897)

5 Heimweh II (O wüßt ich doch den Weg zurück), Op. 63 No. 8 Klaus Groth

6 Vergebliches Ständchen (Guten Abend, mein Schatz), Op. 84 No. 4. Niederrheinisches  
Volkslied

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart · (1756 – 1791)

7 Aria – Per questa bella mano, K. 612 Anonyme

Maurice Ravel · (1875 – 1937)

A cycle of three songs from Don Quixote to Dulcinea Poems by Paul Marand

8 · Chanson romanesque

9 · Chanson épique

10 · Chanson à boire

BREAK · 20 mins

Arrigo Boito · (1842 – 1918)

11 Mefistofele – Ecco il mondo, Act II · Mefistofele Arrigo Boito

Giuseppe Verdi · (1813 – 1901)

12 I vespri siciliani – O tu Palermo, Act II · Procida Scribe / Duveyrier · ital. Fusinato

Gioachino Rossini · (1792 – 1868)

13 Il barbiere di Siviglia – La calunnia è un venticello, Act I · Basilio Cesare Sterbini

Antonio Carlos Gomez · (1836 – 1896)

14 Salvator Rosa – Di sposo, di padre, Act II · The Duke of Arcos Antonio Ghislanzoni

# DETAILED MUSICAL PROGRAMME – ORIGIN AND MEANING

\* The sung texts are presented in their original language, followed by English translation \*

## 1. Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687)

### Bois épais — LWV 63 (1684)

An aria from Jean-Baptiste Lully's opera \*Amadis\* (1684). This melancholic aria is sung by Amadis at the end of Act II, Scene 4, as he expresses his despair over lost love in a dark forest.

Bois épais, redouble ton ombre;  
Tu ne saurais être assez sombre,  
Tu ne peux pas trop cacher  
Mon malheureux amour.

Je sens un désespoir  
Dont l'horreur est extrême,  
Je ne dois pas plus voir ce que j'aime,  
Je ne veux plus souffrir le jour.

### Deep woods

Deep woods, increase your shade;  
You could not be dark enough,  
You could not conceal too well  
My unhappy love.

I feel a despair  
Whose horror is extreme,  
I am to see no longer what I love,  
I want no longer to bear the light of day.

Lyrics from a libretto by Philippe Quinault (1635–1688) · Original French

## 2. Jean-Baptiste Lully

**Il faut passer tôt ou tard** — Charon's aria from Act IV, Scene 1 of the opera *\*Alceste\** (1674). This aria, which is at once comic, melancholic, dramatic and menacing, depicts the ferryman of the underworld demanding the tribute of souls, reflecting on the inevitability of death. It deals with the end of life and love.

Il faut passer tôt ou tard,  
Il faut passer dans ma barque.\*  
On y vient jeune ou vieillard,  
Ainsi qu'il plait à la Parque.  
On y reçoit, sans égard,  
Le berger et le monarque;  
Il faut passer tôt ou tard,  
Il faut passer dans ma barque.\*

Vous qui voulez passer, venez, mânes  
errants;  
Venez, avancez; tristes Ombres;  
Payer le tribut que je prends,  
Ou retournez errer sur ces rivages  
sombres.

Donne, passe, donne, passe...

Demeure, toi; tu n'as rien,  
Il faut que l'on te chasse.  
Crie hélas! Tant que tu voudras;  
Rien pour rien, en tous lieux est une loi  
suivie:  
Les mains vides ont peu d'appas;  
Et ce n'est point assez de payer dans la  
vie,  
Il faut encore payer au-delà du trépas.

Il n'importe peu que l'on crie Helas, Caron  
Helas;  
Il faut encore payer au-delà du trépas.  
Il faut passer tôt ou tard,  
Il faut passer dans ma barque.

### Sooner or later one must cross

Sooner or later one must cross;  
one must cross in my boat.  
One comes here young or old,  
as the Fates see fit. Here,  
without distinction,  
the shepherd and the monarch are  
welcomed;  
Sooner or later one must cross;  
one must cross in my boat.

You who wish to pass, come, wandering  
spirits;  
Come, step forward; sad shadows;  
Pay the tribute I demand,  
Or return to wander these dark shores.

Give, pass, give, pass...

Stay where you are; you have nothing.  
We must drive you away.  
Cry out, alas, as much as you like;  
'Nothing for nothing' is a law observed  
everywhere:  
Empty hands hold little allure;  
And it is not enough to pay in this life;  
one must pay again beyond the grave.

It matters little if one cries, 'Alas, Caron,  
alas';  
one must still pay beyond the grave.  
Sooner or later one must cross;  
one must cross in my boat.

Text from a libretto by Philippe Quinault (1635–1688), based on Euripides' *\*Alcestis\** · Original  
French

### 3. Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

**Du bist wie eine Blume** — op. 25 n°24

The song or poem 'You Are Like a Flower' was published in 1827 in \*The Book of Songs\* and is the 47th poem in the cycle 'Heimkehr' (\*The Homecoming\*). This work, probably written in 1823 or 1824, is one of Heinrich Heine's most famous love poems.

Du bist wie eine Blume,  
So hold und schön und rein;  
Ich schau' dich an, und Wehmuth  
Schleicht mir in's Herz hinein.

Mir ist, als ob ich die Hände  
Auf's Haupt dir legen sollt',  
Betend, daß Gott dich erhalte  
So rein und schön und hold.

#### **You're like a flower**

You are like a flower,  
So lovely, beautiful and pure;  
I look at you, and melancholy  
Creeps into my heart.

I feel as though I ought to lay my hands  
Upon your head,  
Praying that God may keep you  
So pure, beautiful and lovely.

## 4. Robert Schumann

**Ich grolle nicht** — op. 48 n°7

This is the seventh song from Robert Schumann's famous song cycle \*Dichterliebe\* (Op. 48), composed in 1840. It is widely regarded as one of the most powerful and best-known pieces in the German lieder repertoire.

The song depicts a lover who has been rejected: 'I bear no grudge'; the heavy, haunting music reveals the narrator's true bitterness and sorrow. The lyrics describe how he sees his beloved in a dream and witnesses the scene where the 'serpent' gnaws at her heart, suggesting that she is just as unhappy as he is.

Ich grolle nicht, und wenn das Herz auch  
bricht,  
Ewig verlornes Lieb, ich grolle nicht.  
Wie du auch strahlst in Diamantenpracht,  
Es fällt kein Strahl in deines Herzens  
Nacht. Das weiß ich längst.

Ich grolle nicht, und wenn das Herz auch  
bricht,  
Ich sah dich ja im Traum [Traume],  
Und sah die Nacht in deines Herzens  
Raum [Raume],  
Und sah die Schlang', die dir am Herzen  
frißt,  
Ich sah, mein Lieb, wie sehr du elend bist.

### **I bear no grudge**

I bear no grudge, even when my heart is  
breaking!  
Love lost forever! I bear no grudge.  
Although you shine in diamond splendor,  
No beam falls into the night of your heart.  
I will know that for a long time.

I bear no grudge, and when my heart is  
breaking!  
I truly saw you in my dreams,  
And saw the night in the room of your  
heart,  
And saw the snake that bites your heart;  
I saw, my dear, how truly miserable you  
are.

## 5. Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

**Heimweh II** « O wüßt ich doch den Weg zurück » — op. 63 n°8

« Ah! if I but knew the way back », It is a song steeped in nostalgia that expresses a longing to recapture the carefree spirit of childhood. It evokes disappointment with adult life, a desire for peace and maternal comfort, as well as regret at having left behind the 'happiness' of childhood.

### Longing for home II

O wüßt ich doch den Weg zurück,  
Den lieben Weg zum Kinderland!  
O warum sucht' ich nach dem Glück  
Und ließ der Mutter Hand?

Ah! if I but knew the way back,  
The sweet way back to childhood's land!  
Ah! why did I seek my fortune  
And let go my mother's hand?

O wie mich sehnet auszuruhn,  
Von keinem Streben aufgeweckt,  
Die müden Augen zuzutun,  
Von Liebe sanft bedeckt!

Ah! how I long for utter rest,  
Not to be roused by any striving,  
Long to close my weary eyes,  
Gently shrouded by love!

Und nichts zu forschen, nichts zu spähn,  
Und nur zu träumen leicht und lind;  
Der Zeiten Wandel nicht zu sehn,  
Zum zweiten Mal ein Kind!

And search for nothing, watch for nothing,  
Dream only light and gentle dreams,  
Not to see the times change,  
To be a child a second time!

O zeig mir doch den Weg zurück,  
Den lieben Weg zum Kinderland!  
Vergebens such ich nach dem Glück,  
Ringsum ist öder Strand!

Ah! show me that way back,  
The sweet way back to childhood's land!  
I seek happiness in vain,  
Ringed round by barren shores.

Text by Klaus Groth (1819–1899), 'Heimweh II', appears in \*Hundert Blätter, Paralipomena zum Quickborn\*, Hamburg, first published in 1854. · Original German

## 6. Johannes Brahms

### Vergebliches Ständchen — op. 84 n°4

It is a dialogue that is both humorous and dramatic, between a suitor and his beloved, who rejects him. Describe a courtship on a cold night that ends in rejection: a persistent young man begs for the door to be opened, whilst the girl categorically refuses, fearing gossip and the fickleness of love.

Guten Abend, mein Schatz,  
Guten Abend, mein Kind!  
Ich komm aus Lieb' zu dir,  
Ach, mach' mir auf die Tür,  
Mach' mir auf die Tür!

Meine Tür ist verschlossen,  
Ich laß dich nicht ein;  
Mutter, die rät' mir klug,  
Wärst du herein mit Fug,  
Wär's mit mir vorbei!

So kalt ist die Nacht,  
So eisig der Wind,  
Daß mir das Herz erfriert,  
Mein' Lieb' erlöschen wird;  
Öffne mir, mein Kind!

Löschet dein' Lieb';  
Lass' sie löschen nur!  
Löschet sie immerzu,  
Geh' heim zu Bett, zur Ruh',  
Gute Nacht, mein Knab'!

### A Futile Serenade

Good evening, my treasure,  
Good evening, sweet girl!  
I come from love of you,  
Ah, open the door,  
Open the door for me!

My door is locked,  
And I won't let you in:  
My mother has advised me well!  
If you came in,  
It would all be over for me!

The night is so cold,  
And the wind so icy  
That my heart will freeze,  
And my love will be extinguished!  
Open for me, sweet girl!

If your love starts dying,  
Then let it be extinguished!  
If it keeps dying,  
Go home to bed, and rest!  
Good night, my boy!

## 7. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

### Per questa bella mano — K. 612

Concert Aria – Composed in Vienna on 8 March 1791 for bass and orchestra, this work is notable for the prominent solo part for the double bass, which engages in an unconventional dialogue with the solo voice.

Per questa bella mano,  
Per questi vaghi rai  
Giuro, mio ben, che mai  
Non amerò che te.  
L'aure, le piante, i sassi,  
Che i miei sospir ben sanno,  
A te qual sia diranno  
La mia costante fé.

Volgi lieti o fieri sguardi,  
Dimmi pur che m'odi o m'ami,  
Sempre acceso ai dolci dardi,  
Sempre tuo vo' che mi chiami,  
Né cangiar può terra o cielo  
Quel desio che vive in me.

### For this beautiful hand

For this beautiful hand,  
For these lovely eyes  
I swear, my dear, that  
I shall love none but you.  
The breeze, the stones and trees  
That know well my sighs  
Will tell you all you want  
That I am undyingly true.

Give me happy or haughty looks  
Even tell me you hate or love me  
Always, you may have ambrosial arrows,  
Always, it is your voice above me.  
Neither earth nor heaven can dim  
The longing that lives within.

Anonymous text / Author unknown · Original in Italian

## 8. 9. 10 Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

### Don Quichotte à Dulcinée (1932–1933)

A cycle of songs composed for baritone and orchestra (or piano). The three melodies — 'Romantic Song', 'Epic Song' and 'Drinking Song' — depict Don Quixote's love, spirituality and joy of life, set to Spanish rhythms (guajira, zorzico, jota). These songs combine the tragic and chivalrous image of the knight with comic elements.

I. **Chanson romanesque** (Romance song) : A tender love song in which Don Quixote declares his unconditional devotion to Dulcinea. He promises to stop the earth or bring on the night if she asks him to, in order to win her favour.

« Si vous me disiez que la terre  
À tant tourner vous offensa,  
Je lui dépêcherais Pança:  
Vous la verriez fixe et se taire.

~~Si vous me disiez que l'ennui~~  
Vous vient du ciel trop fleuri d'astres,  
Déchirant les divins cadastres,  
Je faucherais d'un coup la nuit.

~~Si vous me disiez que l'espace~~  
Ainsi vidé ne vous plaît point,  
Chevalier dieu, la lance au poing.  
J'étoilerais le vent qui passe.

~~Mais si vous disiez que mon sang~~  
Est plus à moi qu'à vous, ma Dame,  
Je blêmirais dessous le blâme  
Et je mourrais, vous bénissant.

Ô Dulcinée. »

## Romantic song

Were you to tell that the earth  
Offended you with so much turning,  
I'd dispatch Panza to deal with it:  
You'd see it still and silenced.

Were you to tell me that you are wearied  
By a sky too studded with stars -  
Tearing the divine order asunder,  
I'd scythe the night with a single blow.

Were you to tell me that space itself,  
Thus denuded was not to your taste -  
As a god-like knight, with lance in hand,  
I'd sow the fleeting wind with stars.

But were you to tell me that my blood  
Is more mine, my Lady, than your own,  
I'd pale at the admonishment  
And, blessing you, would die.

O Dulcinea.

II. **Chanson épique** (Epic Song) : A prayer addressed to Saint Michael and Saint George, asking for their protection for himself and for Dulcinea. It is a chivalric and devotional song that reflects the knight's piety.

« Bon Saint Michel qui me donnez loisir  
De voir ma Dame et de l'entendre,  
~~Bon Saint Michel qui me daignez choisir~~  
Pour lui complaire et la défendre,  
~~Bon Saint Michel veuillez descendre~~  
Avec Saint Georges sur l'autel  
De la Madone au bleu mantel.

D'un rayon du ciel bénissez ma lame  
Et son égale en pureté  
Et son égale en piété  
Comme en pudeur et chasteté:  
Ma Dame.

~~(Ô grands Saint Georges et Saint Michel)~~  
L'ange qui veille sur ma veille,  
Ma douce Dame si pareille  
À Vous, Madone au bleu mantel!  
Amen. »

## Epic Song

Good Saint Michael who gives me leave  
To behold and hear my Lady,  
Good Saint Michael who deigns to elect  
me  
To please her and defend her,  
Good Saint Michael, descend, I pray,  
With Saint George onto the altar  
Of the Madonna robed in blue.

With a heavenly beam bless my blade  
And its equal in purity  
And its equal in piety  
As in modesty and chastity:  
My Lady.

(O great Saint George and great Saint  
Michael)  
Bless the angel watching over my vigil,  
My sweet Lady, so like unto Thee,  
O Madonna robed in blue!  
Amen.

III. **Chanson à boire** (Drinking song) : A lively and humorous waltz in which Don Quixote celebrates life, wine and joy. He raises a toast to love and mocks those who condemn him, the rhythm mimicking the knight's unsteady steps.

### Drinking song

« Foin du bâtard, illustre Dame,  
Qui pour me perdre à vos doux yeux  
~~Dit que l'amour et le vin vieux~~  
Mettent en deuil mon cœur, mon âme!

A pox on the bastard, illustrious Lady,  
Who to discredit me in your sweet eyes,  
Says that love and old wine  
Are saddening my heart and soul!

~~Je bois~~  
~~À la joie!~~  
La joie est le seul but  
Où je vais droit ... lorsque j'ai bu!

I drink  
To joy!  
Joy is the only goal  
To which I go straight... when I'm... drunk!

Foin du jaloux, brune maîtresse,  
Qui geint, qui pleure et fait serment  
D'être toujours ce pâle amant  
Qui met de l'eau dans son ivresse!

A pox on the jealous wretch, O dusky  
mistress,  
Who whines and weeps and vows  
Always to be this lily-livered lover  
Who dilutes his drunkenness!

~~Je bois~~  
~~À la joie!~~  
La joie est le seul but  
Où je vais droit ...  
Lorsque j'ai bu! »

I drink  
To joy!  
Joy is the only goal  
To which I go straight... when I'm... drunk!

Text by Paul Morand (1888–1976), copyright © · Original in French

BREAK · 20 minutes

## 11. Arrigo Boito (1842–1918)

**Ecco il mondo** — Opera Mefistofele (1868, \*prima versione\*; 1875, \*versione definitiva\*). We are in the second scene of the second act of the opera, where Mephistopheles shows Faust the classic Sabbath night. Witches and warlocks dance around him. Mephistopheles complains that, although he is their king, he has neither a crown nor a sceptre. The witches and wizards dance and bring them to him. Then Mephistopheles says:

'I have a throne, I have a sceptre and I am a despot,  
I am proud of my kingdom.  
But I want the whole world  
To clench in my fist.'

After yet another dance, the sorcerers bring him a glass globe. Mephistopheles then rises and sings this aria. As he sings the final verse, he smashes the glass globe on the floor, provoking wild joy among the sorcerers, who rise and begin the dance once more.

### Voici le monde

Ecco il mondo - vuoto e tondo,  
S'alza, scende - balza e splende.  
Fa carole - intorno al sole,  
Trema, rugge - dà e distrugge .  
Ora sterile, or fecondo  
Ecco il mondo.

Sul suo grosso - antico dosso  
V'è una schiatta - e sozza e matta,  
Fiera, vile - ria sottile.  
Che ad (ogni) ogn'ora - si divora  
Dalla cima sino al fondo  
D(n)el reo mondo.

Fola vana - è a lei Satàna,  
Riso e scherno - è a lei l'inferno,  
Scherno e riso - il Paradiso.  
Oh per Dio ! - Che or rido anch'io,  
Nel pensar ciò che le ascondo...  
Ecco il mondo.

Here is the world – empty and round,  
It rises, falls – leaps and shines.  
It dances in circles – round the sun,  
It trembles, roars – gives and destroys.  
Now barren, now fertile  
Here is the world.

Upon its vast, ancient back,  
There is a race—filthy and mad,  
Proud, vile—a subtle stream.  
Which at every hour—devours itself  
From the summit to the depths  
Of this wicked world.

A vain fable—that is Satan to her,  
Laughter and scorn—that is hell to her,  
Scorn and laughter—that is Paradise.  
Oh, by God!—Now I too am laughing,  
As I think of what I hide from her..  
Behold the world.

The libretto, like the music, was written directly by Boito himself, who was both a librettist and a composer. He drew inspiration from Goethe's \*Faust\*, whilst also drawing on Blaze de Bury's French translation ·

Original Italian

## 12. Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

O tu, Palermo — Opera I vespri siciliani.

Scene, cavatina and cabaletta for the character of Giovanni da Procida (with chorus). It is a passionate appeal to his native Sicily to free itself from French oppression, and expresses a deep love and longing for Palermo, his beloved homeland.

O patria, o cara patria, alfin ti veggo!  
L'esule ti saluta dopo sì lunga assenza;  
Il fiorente tuo suolo ripien d'amore io  
bacio,  
Reco il mio voto a te, col braccio e il core!

O tu, Palermo, terra adorata,  
A me sì caro riso d'amor,  
Ah ! Alza la fronte tanto oltraggiata,  
Il tuo ripiglia - primier splendor! \*  
(2x -Ah! torna al primiero, almo splendor)

Chiesi aita a straniere nazioni,  
Ramingai per castella e città:  
Ma, insensibili ai fervidi(o) sproni(e),  
dicea ciascun : Siciliani! ov'è il prisco  
valor ?  
Su, sorgete a vittoria, all'onor

\* Bis...

### O Palermo

O homeland, O beloved homeland, at last  
I see you! The exile greets you after such  
a long absence; I kiss your flourishing soil,  
filled with love; I offer my vow to you, with  
arm and heart!

O Palermo, beloved land,  
So dear to me, smile of love,  
Ah! Lift up your much-scorned brow,  
Regain your former splendour! \*  
(2x -Ah! Return to your former, noble splendour)

I sought aid from foreign nations,  
I wandered through castles and cities:  
But, unmoved by fervent entreaties,  
each one said: Sicilians! Where is your  
former valour?  
Come, rise to victory, to honour

\* Repeat...

### 13. Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868)

**La calunnia è un venticello** — Opera *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

A famous opera aria from Gioachino Rossini's *\*The Barber of Seville\** (1816), sung by the character Don Basilio. It means 'Slander is a gentle breeze' in Italian. This aria (cavatina) metaphorically describes slander as an insidious rumour, gentle at first, which spreads and grows to become a destructive force, comparable to a storm that ruins a reputation. In the opera, the character of Don Basilio explains to Bartolo how to destroy Count Almaviva's reputation by using slander.

The music of this aria is known for its gradual crescendo, perfectly mimicking the spread of the rumour.

La calunnia è un venticello,  
Un'auretta assai gentile  
Che insensibile, sottile,  
Leggermente, dolcemente,  
Incomincia a sussurrar.  
Piano, piano, terra terra,  
Sottovoce, sibilando,  
Va scorrendo, va ronzando  
Nelle orecchie della gente  
S'introduce destramente,  
E le teste ed i cervelli  
Fa stordire e fa gonfiar.

Dalla bocca fuori uscendo  
lo schiamazza va crescendo,  
Prende forza a poco a poco,  
Vola già di loco in loco;  
Sembra ti tuono, la tempesta  
Che nei sen della foresta  
Va fischiando, brontolando  
E ti fa d'orror gelar.  
Alla fin trabocca e scoppia,  
Si propaga, si raddoppia  
E produce un'esplosione  
Come un colpo di cannone,  
Un tremuoto, un temporale,  
Un tumulto generale,  
Che fa l'aria rimbombar.

E il meschino calunniato,  
Avvilto, calpestato,  
Sotto il pubblico flagello  
Per gran sorte va a crepar.

#### **Slander is a gentle breeze**

Slander is a gentle breeze,  
A most gentle breeze  
that, imperceptibly, subtly,  
Lightly, softly,  
Begins to whisper.  
Slowly, slowly, down to earth,  
In a whisper, hissing,  
It flows, it buzzes  
In people's ears  
It slips in deftly,  
And their heads and minds  
It stuns and inflates.

As it bursts forth from the mouth,  
the clamour grows louder,  
Gaining strength little by little,  
Already flying from place to place;  
It seems like thunder, the storm  
That in the depths of the forest  
It whistles and growls  
And fills you with dread.  
At last it overflows and bursts forth,  
It spreads, it doubles  
And produces an explosion  
Like a cannon shot,  
An earthquake, a storm,  
A general uproar,  
That makes the air rumble.

And the wretched slandered man,  
humiliated, trampled upon,  
under the public scourge  
by some cruel twist of fate meets his end.

## 14. Antonio Carlos Gomez (1836–1896)

*Di sposo, di padre* — Opera by Salvator Rosa, 1874.

This aria by the Brazilian composer is one of the most famous for the bass voice in the 19th-century operatic repertoire.

The aria appears at the beginning of Act II. It is sung by the Duke of Arcos, the Spanish viceroy in Naples, who is the antagonist of the story. In a moment of introspection, after agreeing to a meeting with the rebel Masaniello, the Duke reflects on his life marked by war, politics and terror.

It constitutes a moment of great dramatic intensity, expressing the conflict between his family duties—as a husband and father—and his patriotic and moral commitment. The composition combines intimate lyricism with heroic tension, typical of 19th-century Italian melodrama.

**Recitativo:**

E il foglio io segnerò?...  
 Poiché di Spagna tardano gli aiuti...  
 il capo piegar m'è forza  
 ed accettar la tregua.  
 Patteggiar coi ribelli,  
 il Duca d'Arcos!...  
 Oh! si affretti il giorno  
 che dal mio nome cancellata sia,  
 tanta vergogna!

**Acompagnato:**

E come?...  
 Oh! Qual m'appare allo sguardo, al  
 pensier  
 Vortice orrendo di delitti e di sangue!...  
 E qual mercede al mio lungo soffrire?...  
 E qual sollievo all'atre cure...  
 ed ai rimorsi atroci?  
 Logoro arnese del poter,  
 Sospetto al Re... Sospetto a la patria,  
 Sovra terra straniera  
 infamato morir e maledetto!...

**Aria:**

Di sposo... di padre... le gioie serene,  
 i teneri affetti son muti per me...  
 Mi chiamar possente... ma schiavo mi  
 tiene,  
 m'incalza ai delitti lo spettro d'un Re.  
 Se in cor di clemenza mi parla una voce...  
 D'un popolo straziato s'io piego al dolor,  
 punisci, punisci!... mi grida una voce...  
 Son legge a chi regna la strage, il terror!

**En tant que mari... en tant que père****Recitative:**

And shall I sign the document?...  
 Since aid from Spain is slow in coming...  
 I am forced to bow my head  
 and accept the truce.  
 To make a deal with the rebels,  
 the Duke of Arcos!...  
 Oh! May the day hasten  
 when such shame  
 is erased from my name!

**Accompaniment:**

And how?...  
 Oh! What appears before my eyes, in my  
 thoughts—  
 a hideous whirlwind of crimes and  
 blood!...  
 And what reward for my long suffering?...  
 And what relief from my dark cares...  
 and my agonising remorse?  
 A worn-out instrument of power,  
 Suspected by the King... Suspected by  
 my country,  
 On foreign soil  
 to die disgraced and cursed!...

**Aria:**

The serene joys of a husband... of a  
 father...  
 the tender affections are silent to me...  
 He calls me mighty... yet keeps me a  
 slave,  
 the spectre of a King drives me to crime.  
 If a voice speaks to me of mercy in my  
 heart...  
 If I bow to the pain of a tormented people,  
 punish, punish!... a voice cries out to  
 me...  
 I am the law to those who reign through  
 slaughter and terror!

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