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Je crois entendre encore

G. BIZET (1838 - 1875)

Les Pêcheurs de Perles (The Pearl Fishers), Bizet's first important opera, premièred in Paris in 1863. The setting is ancient Ceylon; the action is built on the rivalry between two fishermen, Nadir and Zurga, for the love of Leïla, a priestess. After typical operatic convolution, Nadir and Leïla survive united.

In Act 1 (#4), Nadir, seeing Leïla after a long absence, sings of his love. "I can see myself hidden beneath the palms hearing her voice, tender and sonorous as the song of a dove. What a magical night of divine ecstasy - what a charming memory of wild rapture - what a sweet dream!" The second verse (not used here) continues "I can see her again in the bright starlight, her veils moving in the warm evening breeze." The hypnotic mood of this aria was tenderly captured by the Italian tenor Ferruccio Tagliavini.

Andante (♩=60)

Flute

p I think I hear a - gain hid - den 'neath the palms

her voice, ten - der and sonorous as the song of a dove. Oh night

of en - chant - ment, di - vine and ra - vish - ing, a me - mo - ry of charm, wild

pp rap - ture, sweet dream. *pp* What char - ming me - mo - ry! *smorzando*

Un bel dì, vedremo

G. PUCCINI (1858 - 1924)

Madama Butterfly, Puccini's sixth opera, following Tosca, was first performed in Milan in 1904. Poorly received, it was withdrawn after one performance, and revised over the next two years into the form now generally heard. The original second act was divided into two acts and some material was cut. The story, based on Belasco's play, tells of Cio-Cio-San (known as Butterfly) and her marriage to Lt. Pinkerton of the U.S.Navy. He is not serious about the marriage and leaves to find a real wife in America. Butterfly waits for his return to show him his son, but when he does return he brings his American wife. Realizing she has no future, Butterfly kills herself.

At the opening of the second act Cio-Cio-San tells her maid to believe that Pinkerton will truly come back: "One fine day we'll see a wisp of smoke on the horizon .. the white ship will enter the harbor sounding its cannon..I'll wait for him up here ..He'll appear first as a dot and then I'll hear him calling me but I won't answer, partly to tease him and partly not to die at this first meeting- this will happen, I promise - with sure faith I'm waiting." Note how Puccini uses descriptive terms rather than dynamics to indicate the color of the voice, and how he constantly modifies the tempo to follow the text and the broad range of emotions in this aria. Spanish soprano, Victoria de los Angeles, captured this mood beautifully on record.

Andante molto calmo (♩=40)

12 Flute

p Un bel dì, ve-dre-mo a wisp of smoke a-ri-sing from the di-stant ho-ri-

7 *poco rall.* then the ship ap-pears. *Un poco mosso* Then the white ship *ritenuto* en-ters in-to the har-bor, *Un poco mo*

15 *ritenuto* You see? He has come! *rall.* I don't go down to meet him, not I. *A Ter con ser*

con passione *dolcemente*

22 *rit.* I wait a long time, but *a temp* wai-ting does not or

31 *rall. un r* a man, a ti-ny speck,

40 *re* comes, what will



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Piangerò la sorte mia

G. F. HANDEL (1685 - 1759)

Handel's great opera, *Giulio Cesare* (Julius Caesar), was first performed in London in 1724. The story is of Caesar's time in Egypt and his well recorded relationship with Cleopatra. In the third Act (#32) Cleopatra is ordered to prison by her brother King Ptolemy. Her exquisite lament (Largo), "I'll weep for my fate, so cruel and evil, as long as I live" is interrupted by her anger at her brother (Allegro), "but once I am dead my ghost will not leave the tyrant alone, night or day." "Piangerò," "I shall weep" has its accent on the last syllable, which always comes on the down-beat. Note the emphasis given to its repeat by the larger interval and dotted rhythm. The next time the word is a falling halfstep, making a chromaticism, with an appoggiatura on the last syllable for extra emotion. The repetition corrects the accidental for another falling halfstep. In bar 26 this word shows how the text affects the phrasing. An instrumentalist would normally phrase through this bar. In the next bar the first two notes are not connected, the 'ò' occurring only on the first sixteenth. Interestingly, the sad music is in the major key, and the angry music is in the minor key. While there are no dynamic indications in the original, the implication is obvious from the words. This is also true of the length of notes. The Largo should be very legato with soft articulation; the Allegro more detached with stronger articulation. The extended sixteenth note passages occur on the ending of the word *Agiterò* (our 'agitate'), a musical picture of how Cleopatra's ghost will torment her brother. I have added some ornamentation to the da capo. In the inaugural season of the New York City Opera at Lincoln Center in 1966, Beverly Sills brought the house down with her ravishing legato and brilliant passage work in this aria which she later recorded.

Largo (♩=56)

Flute

p I shall weep I shall weep

I shall weep I shall weep

I shall weep

Allegro (♩=117)

f



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