

## OPERAS FOR AUGUST 2020

August 5	Elegy for Young Lovers	Hans Werner Henze
12	Don Carlo	Guiseppe Verdi
19	Double Bill Ein Herbstmanover	Emmerich Kálmán
	Les Mamelles de Tiresias	Francis Poulenc
26	Medea in Corinto	Giovanni Simone Mayr

### Details of the Operas

#### **ELEGY FOR YOUNG LOVERS**                      Hans Werner Henze composer

Librettists WH Auden and C Kallmann.

First performance: In German - Schwetzingen (Schlosstheater), 20 May 1961.

First UK performance: In English - Glyndebourne, 13 July 1961.

#### **Background**

Henze is probably the most internationally successful German opera composer since World War 2. Certainly *Elegy* has been his most successful work in Britain, having had three separate productions: Glyndebourne 1961, Scottish Opera 1970, and English National Opera 2010. The librettists, Auden and Kallman had already produced a successful text a decade earlier for Stravinsky (*The Rake's Progress*), and *Elegy* shares a similar black and sardonic sense of wit and of the ridiculous. The leading character, created by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, is a monstrous egotist, a famous poet suffering from writer's block who deliberately brings about the deaths of a young couple in a blizzard, in the hope that this will stir his creative juices to action once again.

#### **Characters**

Elisabeth Zimmer (soprano)

Hilda Mack, a widow (soprano)

Carolina, Grafिन von Kirchstetten (contralto)

Toni Reischmann (tenor)

Gregor Mittenhofer, a poet (baritone)

Dr Wilhelm Reischmann (bass)

Joseph Mauer, a mountain guide (spoken)

**Act 1:** The self centred poet, Gregor Mittenhofer, is paying his annual visit to an Austrian alpine hotel in the company of his many admirers, including his current lover Elisabeth Zimmer, his secretary, Countess Carolina von Kirchstetten, who also helps finance his activities, and his personal physician Dr. Reischmann, who has also brought with him, his son Toni, who seems to be the only person in the company who is rather sceptical about the poet's real motives.

The point of their stay at the hotel, is to renew contact with a resident there, the widow, Hilda Mack. Year after year, this unhappy woman, who has never left the hotel, manages to excite and nourish the poet's imagination with her hallucinations, and provide him with the inspiration he needs for an annual poem. The reason for this being that on their wedding day, in 1870, some 40 years previously, Hilda Mack's fiancé went into the mountains to pick edelweiss for his bride. But never returning, Hilda has since surrendered herself to hopeless

delusions. Being constantly fed by this ongoing and unresolved drama, and expecting more of the same, the poet's inspiration is suddenly threatened by an unforeseen occurrence. The day after the poet's arrival, and some forty years after his unfortunate disappearance, the body of Hilda Mack's fiancé is found under the ice. For her, when told of this, some sort of finality has now been reached, and Hilda Mack is restored to some semblance of normality, and prepares to leave. But in light of this unexpected development, it now appears that the poet and his party are in the hotel for no real purpose. Certainly, not the usual one.

**Act 2:** They now all turn their attention to their own impressions and interrelationships. Toni and the poet's lover, Elizabeth, develop feelings for each other despite paternal warnings and admonitions from Mittenhofer's secretary Caroline, who informs the poet what is happening. Initially, Mittenhofer appears to be able to wield his influence and authority over Elizabeth. In order to win her back, he reads an extract from his unfinished poem, "The Young Lovers," which he is working on at the time and begs her for one last labour of love: The young couple, whose relationship he now appears to have accepted, must bring him an Edelweiss from the mountains, and he encourages them to set out on this endeavour. However, Mittenhofer and the countess fail to warn Elizabeth and Toni that there is a snow storm approaching and soon after they set out into the mountains the storm comes. The young lovers both trapped, die, tightly embraced in each other's arms, and the poet, who could have prevented this, is rather pleased that their death has provided him with the inspiration he needed to finish his poem.

**Act 3:** After the departure of Hilda Mack, and the death of the young lovers, the dénouement of the opera takes place a year later during a "Poet's Hour" in a theatre in Vienna. Mittenhofer reads from his now completed Elegy for Young Lovers. In adoration of the poet, the stage audience is not aware of the fact that he could only have written the elegy because he was, in fact, an accessory to the death of those whom he eulogizes. The real audience, however, knows better. And in the background, are heard the voices of those who paid the price for this man's creativity.

**Don Carlos** is a five-act grand opera composed by Giuseppe Verdi to a French-language libretto by Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle, based on the dramatic play *Don Carlos, Infant von Spanien* (*Don Carlos, Infante of Spain*) by Friedrich Schiller. The opera is usually performed in Italian. In addition, it has been noted by David Kimball that the Fontainebleau scene and auto da fé "were the most substantial of several incidents borrowed from a contemporary play on Philip II by Eugène Cormon".

The opera's story is based on conflicts in the life of Carlos, Prince of Asturias (1545–1568). Though he was betrothed to Elisabeth of Valois, part of the peace treaty ending the Italian War of 1551–1559 between the Houses of Habsburg and Valois demanded that she be married instead to his father Philip II of Spain. It was commissioned and produced by the Théâtre Impérial de l'Opéra (Paris Opera) and given its premiere at the Salle Le Peletier on 11 March 1867.

When performed in one of its several Italian versions, the opera is generally called *Don Carlo*. The first Italian version given in Italy was in Bologna in March 1867. Revised again by Verdi, it was given in Naples in November/December 1872. Finally, two other versions were prepared: the first was seen in Milan in January 1884 (in which the four acts were based

on some original French text which was then translated). That is now known as the "Milan version", while the second—also sanctioned by the composer—became the "Modena version" and was presented in that city in December 1886. It restored the "Fontainebleau" first act to the Milan four-act version.

It is the 1886 Modena 5 Act version that will be presented on 5MBS.

Over the following twenty years, cuts and additions were made to the opera, resulting in a number of versions being available to directors and conductors. No other Verdi opera exists in so many versions. At its full length (including the ballet and the cuts made before the first performance), it contains close to four hours of music and is Verdi's longest opera.

The website [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don\\_Carlos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Carlos) contains details of the many different versions of this opera.

### **Synopsis**

[This synopsis is based on the original five-act version composed for Paris and completed in 1866. Important changes for subsequent versions are noted in indented brackets. First lines of arias, etc., are given in French and Italian].

#### **Act 1: The Forest of Fontainebleau, France in winter**

A prelude and chorus of woodcutters and their wives is heard. They complain of their hard life, made worse by war with Spain. Elisabeth, daughter of the King of France, arrives with her attendants. She reassures the people that her impending marriage to Don Carlos, Infante and son of Philip II, King of Spain, will bring the war to an end, and departs.

[This was cut before the Paris première and replaced by a short scene in which Elisabeth crosses the stage and hands out money to the woodcutters; she exits without singing]

Carlos, coming out from hiding, has seen Elisabeth and fallen in love with her (Aria: "Je l'ai vue" / "Io la vidi"). When she reappears, he initially pretends to be a member of the Count of Lerma's delegation. She asks him about Don Carlos, whom she has not yet met. Before long, Carlos reveals his true identity and his feelings, which she reciprocates (Duet: "De quels transports poignants et doux" / "Di quale amor, di quanto ardor"). A cannon-shot signifies that peace has been declared between Spain and France. Thibault appears and gives Elisabeth the surprising news that her hand is to be claimed not by Carlos but by his father, Philip. When Lerma and his followers confirm this, Elisabeth is devastated but feels bound to accept, in order to consolidate the peace. She departs for Spain, leaving Carlos equally devastated.

#### **Act 2**

[This is Act 1 in the 1883 revision]

**Scene 1:** The monastery of Saint-Just (San Jerónimo de Yuste) in Spain. The scene takes place soon after King Philip II and Elisabeth have gotten married. Monks pray for the soul of the former Emperor Charles V ("Carlo Quinto"). The monks' leader proclaims that the Emperor was proud but has been humbled through error, and that the turbulence of the world persists even in sacred places; we cannot rest except in Heaven.

Don Carlos enters, anguished that the woman he loves is now his stepmother.

[In the 1883 revision, he sings a revised version of the aria "Je l'ai vue" / "Io la vidi", which was salvaged from the omitted first act but with some different music and different text to reflect his current situation. In the four-act version he already knows that he cannot marry Elisabeth. In the original, when singing the aria, he was still expecting to marry her]

Carlos greets his great friend Rodrigue, Marquis of Posa, who has just arrived from the oppressed land of Flanders (Aria: "J'étais en Flandres").

Posa asks for the Infante's aid on behalf of the suffering people there. Carlos reveals that he loves his stepmother. Posa is first shocked, but then sympathetic. He encourages Carlos to leave Spain and go to Flanders, and to forget his pain by focusing on political activity there. The two men swear eternal friendship (Duet: "Dieu, tu semas dans nos âmes" / "Dio, che nell'alma infondere").

King Philip and his new wife, with their attendants, enter also to do homage at Charles V's tomb, while Don Carlos laments his lost love.

**Scene 2:** A garden near Saint-Just. Princess Eboli sings the Veil Song ("Au palais des fées" / "Nel giardino del bello") about a Moorish King trying to seduce an alluring veiled beauty, who turns out to be his own neglected wife. Elisabeth enters. Posa gives her a letter from France, which covers a secret note from Don Carlos. At his urging (Aria: "L'Infant Carlos, notre espérance" / "Carlo ch'è sol il nostro amore"), Elisabeth agrees to see the Infante alone. Unaware of this relationship, Eboli infers that she, Eboli, is the one Don Carlos loves.

When they are alone, Don Carlos tells Elisabeth that he is miserable, and asks her to request the King to send him to Flanders. She promptly agrees, provoking Carlos to renew his declarations of love, which she piously rejects. Don Carlos exits in a frenzy, shouting that he must be under a curse. The King enters and becomes angry because the Queen is alone and unattended. His suspicions are insulting to her. He orders the lady-in-waiting who was meant to be attending her, the Countess of Aremberg, to return to France, prompting Elizabeth to sing a sorrowful farewell-aria. (Aria: "Oh ma chère compagne" / "Non pianger, mia compagna").

The King now approaches Posa, with whose character and activism he is impressed, and offers to reward him for his loyalty and service. Posa begs the King to stop oppressing the people of Flanders. The King calls Posa's idealism unrealistic and warns that the Grand Inquisitor is watching him. The King confides in Posa, telling him that he fears that Carlos is having an affair with Elisabeth. Posa replies that Carlos is innocent, and offers to watch Elisabeth and to be responsible for her good behaviour. The King gratefully accepts this offer, and again warns Posa to beware of the Grand Inquisitor.

**Act 3. Scene 1:** Evening in the Queen's garden in Madrid. Elisabeth is tired, and wishes to concentrate on the following day's coronation of the King. To avoid the divertissement planned for the evening, she exchanges masks with Eboli, assuming that thereby her absence will not be noticed, and leaves.

[In the première, the ballet (choreographed by Lucien Petipa and entitled "La Pérégrina") took place at this point]

Don Carlos enters, clutching a note suggesting a tryst in the gardens. Although he thinks this is from Elisabeth, it is really from Eboli. Eboli, who still thinks Don Carlos loves her, enters. Don Carlos mistakes her for Elisabeth in the dark, and passionately declares his love. When he sees Eboli's face, he realizes his error and recoils from her. Eboli guesses his secret - that he was expecting the Queen, whom he loves. Carlos, terrified, begs for mercy. Posa enters. Eboli threatens to tell the King that Elisabeth and Carlos are lovers. Posa warns her not to cross him; he is the King's confidant. Eboli replies by hinting darkly that she a formidable and dangerous foe, with power which Posa does not yet know about. (Her power is that she is

having an affair with the King, but she does not reveal this yet.) Posa draws his dagger, intending to stab her to death, but reconsiders, spares her, and declares his trust in the Lord. Eboli exits in a vengeful rage. Posa advises Carlos to entrust to him any sensitive, potentially incriminating political documents that he may have and, when Carlos agrees, they reaffirm their friendship.

**Scene 2:** In front of the Cathedral of Valladolid. Preparations are being made for an "Auto-da-fé", the public parade and burning of condemned heretics. While the people celebrate, monks drag the condemned to the woodpile. A royal procession follows, and the King addresses the populace, promising to protect them with fire and sword. Don Carlos enters with six Flemish envoys, who plead with the King for their country's freedom. Although the people and the court are sympathetic, the King, supported by the monks, orders his guards to arrest the envoys. Carlos demands that the King grant him authority to govern Flanders; the King scornfully refuses. Enraged, Carlos draws his sword against the King. The King calls for help but the guards will not attack Don Carlos. Posa steps in and takes the sword from Carlos. Relieved and grateful, the King raises Posa to the rank of Duke. The monks fire the woodpile, and as the flames start to rise, a heavenly voice can be heard promising heavenly peace to the condemned souls.

#### **Act 4**

[This is Act 3 in the 1883 revision]

**Scene 1:** Dawn in King Philip's study in Madrid. Alone, the King, in a reverie, laments that Elisabeth has never loved him, that his position means that he has to be eternally vigilant and – returning to a central theme – that he will only sleep properly when he is in his tomb in the Escorial (Aria: "Elle ne m'aime pas" / "Ella giammai m'amò"). The blind, ninety-year-old Grand Inquisitor is announced and shuffles into the King's apartment. When the King asks if the Church will object to him putting his own son to death, the Inquisitor replies that the King will be in good company: God sacrificed His own son. In return for his support, the Inquisitor demands that the King have Posa killed. The King refuses at first to kill his friend, whom he admires and likes. However, the Grand Inquisitor reminds the King that the Inquisition can take down any king; he has created and destroyed other rulers before. Frightened and overwhelmed, the King begs the Grand Inquisitor to forget about the past discussion. The latter replies "Peut-être" / "Forse!" – perhaps! – and leaves. The King bitterly muses on his helplessness to oppose the Church.

Elisabeth enters, alarmed at the apparent theft of her jewel casket. However, the King produces it and points to the portrait of Don Carlos which it contains, accusing her of adultery. She protests her innocence but, when the King threatens her, she faints. In response to his calls for help, into the chamber come Eboli and Posa. Their laments of suspicion cause the King to realize that he has been wrong to suspect his wife ("Maudit soit le soupçon infâme" / "Ah, sii maledetto, sospetto fatale"). Aside, Posa resolves to save Carlos, though it may mean his own death. Eboli feels remorse for betraying Elisabeth; the latter, recovering, expresses her despair.

Elisabeth and Eboli are left together. Eboli confesses that it was she who told the King that Elisabeth and Carlos were having an affair, for revenge against Carlos for having rejected her. She also confesses that she herself has had an affair with the King. Elisabeth orders her to go into exile, or enter a convent. After Elisabeth exits, Eboli, left alone, curses her own

beauty and pride, and resolves to make amends by trying to save Carlos from the Inquisition (Aria: "O don fatal" / "O don fatale").

**Scene 2:** A prison. Don Carlos has been imprisoned. Posa arrives and tells Carlos that he (Posa) has saved Carlos from being executed, by allowing himself (Posa) to be incriminated by the politically sensitive documents which he had obtained from Carlos earlier (Aria, part 1: "C'est mon jour suprême" / "Per me giunto è il dì supremo"). A shadowy figure appears--one of the Grand Inquisitor's assassins--and shoots Posa in the chest. As he dies, Posa tells Carlos that Elisabeth will meet him at Saint-Just the following day. He adds that he is content to die if his friend can save Flanders and rule over a happier Spain (Aria, part 2: "Ah, je meurs, l'âme joyeuse" / "Io morirò, ma lieto in core"). At that moment, the King enters, offering his son freedom, as Posa had arranged. Carlos repulses him for having murdered Posa. The King sees that Posa is dead and cries out in sorrow.

[Duet: Carlos and the King- "Qui me rendra ce mort ?" / "Chi rende a me quest'uom" It was cut before the première and, following it, Verdi authorized its optional removal. The music was later re-used by Verdi for the Lacrimosa of his Messa da Requiem of 1874]

Bells ring as Elisabeth and Eboli enter. The crowd pushes its way into the prison and threatens the King, demanding the release of Carlos. In the confusion, Eboli escapes with Carlos. The people are brave enough at first in the presence of the King, but they are terrified by the arrival of the Grand Inquisitor, and instantly obey his angry command to quiet down and pay homage to the King.

[After the première, some productions ended this act with the death of Posa. However, in 1883 Verdi provided a much shortened version of the insurrection, as he felt that otherwise it would not be clear how Eboli had fulfilled her promise to rescue Carlos]

**Act 5.** [This is Act 4 in the 1883 revision]. The moonlit monastery of Yuste

Elisabeth kneels before the tomb of Charles V. She is committed to help Don Carlos on his way to fulfill his destiny in Flanders, but she herself longs only for death (Aria: "Toi qui sus le néant" / "Tu che le vanità"). Carlos appears and tells her that he has overcome his desire for her; he now loves her honorably, as a son loves his mother. They say a final farewell, promising to meet again in Heaven (Duet: "Au revoir dans un monde où la vie est meilleure" / "Ma lassù ci vedremo in un mondo migliore").

The King and the Grand Inquisitor enter. The King infers that Carlos and Elisabeth have been lovers and demands that they both be immediately killed in a double sacrifice. The Inquisitor confirms that the Inquisition will do its duty. A short summary trial follows, confirming Carlos's putative culpability.

[The trial was omitted in 1883 and does not occur on any recording]

Carlos, calling on God for protection, draws his sword to defend himself against the guards. He is fighting well in spite of being outnumbered, when a mysterious figure (the Monk) suddenly emerges from the tomb of Charles V. He grabs Carlos by the shoulder, and loudly proclaims that the turbulence of the world persists even in the Church; we cannot rest except in Heaven. The King and the Inquisitor recognize the Monk's voice: he is the King's father, Charles V, who was believed dead. Everyone screams in shock and astonishment, while the Monk drags Carlos into the tomb and closes the entrance.

**Ein Herbstmanöver** [Also known in English as “The Gay Hussars”] is an operetta in three acts by Emmerich Kálmán. The piece was Kalman's first operetta and a hit throughout Europe and America. The first version, in Hungarian, *Tatárjárás*, with libretto by Karl von Bakonyi and Andor Gábor, premiered at the Lustspieltheater in Budapest on 22 February 1908. The German version, *Ein Herbstmanöver*, with libretto by K. von Bakonyi and Robert Bodanzky, premiered in Vienna on 22 January 1909. It was so popular that it prompted Kalman to move to Vienna.

### **Synopsis**

Long ago Baroness Risa and Lörentny were lovers. At that time, Lörentny was also the owner of a castle. The relationship broke up and Risa married a rich rival from Lörentny. This rival took away not only the woman, but also the castle. No wonder Lörentny was embittered. He went to the army and became a lieutenant. Now, years later, a manoeuvre is taking place just near this castle. Lieutenant Lörentny, among others, is a participant in this military exercise. The now widowed Risa lives in the castle itself. Lieutenant Lörentny, still bitter, refuses to enter the castle. At the same time, Treszka, the daughter of the field marshal, falls in love with Lörentny. She ignores the advances of a young lieutenant named Marosi.

Further circumstances force Lörentny to take refuge in the castle. He falls in love again with Risa, which makes him desert and stay with her. Both know that this means the end of the lieutenant's military career. Even worse, the field marshal is demanding severe punishment. By persuading Risa and Treszka, however, it can be changed. He reduces the sentence to an arrest of 24 hours. Then Lörentny is free for Risa. At the same time, Treszka, who must now see that there is no chance at Lörentny, is devoted to her admirer Marosi. In the end, in classical operetta tradition, the two pairs found each other and nothing stands in the way of a happy ending.

### **Les mamelles de Tirésias Poulenc**

In about 1903, Appollinaire sketched out the basis for a play called ‘Les mamelles de Tirésias’. Nothing came to fruition until after Appollinaire had been injured in World War 1 in 1916 and presumably, he had the time to complete the work. It’s worth looking again briefly at the text that he wrote for Satie’s ‘Parade’ which was mentioned earlier in the program. What Appollinaire said among many other things was that the ballet ‘Parade’ describes a sort of ‘sur-realism’ in which I see the point of departure for a series to modify the arts and the conduct of life from top to bottom in universal joyousness’. So Appollinaire, who coined the word ‘surrealism’ saw it as being a kind of superimposed realism on life but not a serious view of the world. This must have been known to Poulenc as he contemplated setting Appollinaire’s play back in the 1930’s but World War 2 with all its horrors and deprivations made setting it a matter of urgency. He started composition in 1944 and it had its first performance in 1947 at the Opéra-Comique in Paris.

The story concerns Thérèse who is married to ‘the husband’ and as the opera opens, he is calling on her to cook his breakfast bacon for him. Thérèse comes in and says that she is tired of being a woman; from now on she will be a man and her name will be Tirésias and she wants to become a soldier. Her breasts, she says are an embarrassment and she wants to release them. She opens her blouse and her breasts which are hydrogen balloons, one red and the other blue, float up above her tethered by strings. She takes out a cigarette lighter and

explodes them. She feels her beard sprouting already and congratulates herself as she departs to a brisk paso-doble. This is Poulenc perfectly realising Appollinaire's surrealistic ideals. We'll hear Barbara Bonney as Thérèse/Tirésias and Jean-Paul Fouchécourt as the husband in the opening scene. It ends with Thérèse leaving the house and a piano and a violin fall out of the window onto the pavement below. Shades of the *Goon Show* and other plays from the Theatre of the Absurd.

As the short opera progresses, the husband becomes a shabby housewife while Tirésias becomes a very fashionable male. The husband wants to have children but not having a wife, decides that he will have them on his own. As Act 2 opens, the stage is covered with cradles and the husband is very pleased with himself as he has had 40,000 children in one day. A gendarme comes in and says that it is irresponsible, 'how is he going to feed all the children'. 'With ration books' says the husband and having so many children will be wonderful as they will support him in his old age. In fact he says, he already has a son who has written a novel which has sold 600,000 copies and concludes that the more children you have, the richer you will be. A fortune teller arrives and offers to tell everybody's fortune. The gendarme wants to arrest her claiming that fortune telling is illegal. There's a struggle in which the gendarme is killed and when the husband goes to arrest the fortune teller himself, he finds that it's Thérèse in disguise and she emerges as an elegant lady in evening dress. Thérèse and her husband are reconciled and the opera closes as all the cast urge the audience and all of France to make love and babies and not war.

**Medea in Corinto** (*Medea in Corinth*) is an 1813 opera in Italian by the composer Simon Mayr. It takes the form of a melodramma tragico in two acts. The libretto, by Felice Romani, is based on the Greek myth of Medea and the plays on the theme by Euripides and Pierre Corneille. The same subject had formed the basis for Luigi Cherubini's famous opera *Médée* (1797) which may have had an influence on Mayr's work. *Medea in Corinto* was first performed at the Teatro San Carlo, Naples on 28 November 1813 and was Mayr's greatest theatrical success.

### **Synopsis**

**Act One:** Jason (Giasone) has rejected his former wife, Medea, in favour of Creusa, daughter of King Creon (Creonte) of Corinth. Creon banishes Medea from the city and she swears revenge. Meanwhile, King Aegeus (Egeo) of Athens arrives in Corinth. He had been promised Creusa as his bride. Finding he has been rejected, he makes a pact with Medea. As Jason and Creusa are being married in the temple, Medea bursts in with Aegeus's soldiers and a fight breaks out as they attempt to carry off the bride and bridegroom.

**Act Two:** Creon's men have defeated and captured Medea and Aegeus. In prison, Medea uses her magic powers to summon up demons from the underworld. She kills Creusa with a poisoned robe then stabs her own - and Jason's - children to death, before making her escape in a chariot pulled by flying dragons. In despair, Jason attempts suicide in vain.