

# Chelsea Opera Group

Future performances at  
Southbank Centre's Queen  
Elizabeth Hall, London SE1 8XX

**Sunday 2 June 2013 at 7pm**

## **Alzira**

by Giuseppe Verdi  
Conductor: Gianluca Marciandò  
with Majella Cullagh in the title role

**Sunday 16 March 2014 at 7pm**

## **I Capuleti e i Montecchi**

by Vincenzo Bellini  
Conductor: Robin Newton  
Ana Maria Labin – Giulietta  
Catherine Carby – Romeo

**Sunday 8 June 2014 at 7pm**

## **Stiffelio**

by Giuseppe Verdi  
Nelly Miricioiu – Lina

Tickets for *Die Feen* and *Alzira* are on sale now at £35, £30, £24, £22, £13 from the Southbank Centre Ticket Office: 0844 847 9910. Online: [www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk)

Tickets for *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and *Stiffelio* will be on sale early in the summer of 2013.

For more information about our future performances please visit our website at:  
[www.chelseaoperagroup.org.uk](http://www.chelseaoperagroup.org.uk)



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## For your information

**Chelsea Opera Group** depends on financial assistance from its supporters. To find out about making donations or to join the mailing list to receive advance information about future performances please contact:  
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**Cognoscenti** is a friends' organisation and supporters' group for people with a love of opera. Members enjoy a new season launch party and a range of special events. To learn more about membership (subscriptions from £30) please contact:  
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Or visit: [www.chelseaoperagroup.org.uk](http://www.chelseaoperagroup.org.uk)

# Chelsea Opera Group

# DIE FEEN



## BY RICHARD WAGNER

**Sunday 17 March 2013 at 6pm**

A concert performance in German with surtitles in English  
conducted by **Dominic Wheeler**

**Tickets are on sale now at  
£35, £30, £24, £22, £13**

Supported by the Chelsea Opera Group Trust. Registered Charity Number 247438

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QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL

**SOUTHBANK  
CENTRE**

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# DIE FEEN

**Opera in three acts by Richard Wagner (1813-1883)**  
**Libretto by the composer after Carlo Gozzi's *La donna serpente***  
**First performed in Munich on 29 June 1888**

The early works of great composers can prove well worth hearing. *Die Feen*, composed in 1833 by a 20-year-old Wagner when he was chorus-master in Würzburg, was not performed until 1888, five years after his death. When Bernard Shaw heard the overture, he called it the work of 'no crude amateur', but distinguished by 'youthful grace and fancy as well as earnestness'.

In *Die Feen* Wagner found his true path, one that ran from *Der Freischütz*, *Fidelio*, and Marschner's *Der Vampyr* – though he strayed for a while (he said) when succumbing to the heady delights of Italian opera in the *Das Liebesverbot*, and then striving in *Rienzi* for a super-grand grand opera. Arindal, the hero of *Die Feen*, achieves immortality through his music-making – Wagner's addition to his source, Carlo Gozzi's *La donna serpente* (as is the petrification, rather than reptilization, of the heroine). Refashioning *Measure for Measure* as *Das Liebesverbot*, he made Angelo a stern German voicing that Northern dilemma, intoxicated delight in Mediterranean frivolity mingled with reprobation. *Rienzi* is the drama of a grandiose visionary whose lofty dreams outsoar the comprehension of crowd. It needs no hindsight from the later masterpieces to discern in young Wagner the genius who gave musical and dramatic form to important concerns: love, sex, religion, politics. None of the three early operas is mere mindless entertainment. They share copiousness of musical invention. They have energy, vivacity, and brilliance.

But they are over-copious for practical use. None has ever been heard complete – except in the BBC's 1976 broadcasts, when an uncut *Feen* ran to 3 hours 20 of music, *Das Liebesverbot* to 3 hours, and *Rienzi* to 4 hours 45! All stage or concert performances I've encountered have been much abridged. Yet every one of them has been musically enthralling.

Gozzi's *fiabe drammatiche* have been a fruitful source for operas: Prokofiev's *Love of Three Oranges*, Puccini's *Turandot*, Henze's *Stag King*. The plot of *Die Feen* lies somewhere between *The Magic Flute* and Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Gozzi's name does not figure in the Strauss-Hofmannsthal correspondence, but Strauss knew *Die Feen* well: he helped to prepare the Munich premiere, and he modelled his 'petrification' motif closely on Wagner's.

Near the start we hear, as in *Lohengrin*, the injunction 'Never ask me who I am'. In Lora, the second soprano, we meet the first of the six loving and beloved sisters who run through Wagner's work. In Ada's big aria we recognize features of not only of Leonore and Agathe but also the future Elisabeth; Arindal's mad scene includes the fierce baying that Sieglinde later hears; his harp-accompanied lyre song shares a key with Walther's Prize Song.

But above all it's in its own right, not as an exposition of influences and premonitions, that *Die Feen* proves so enjoyable and exciting.

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