

"Il Trovatore" from 2YA



Verdi's Great Opera Presented by



Signor Lucien Cesaroni

On the evening of October 24, Signor Lucien Cesaroni will present from 2YA the best-known excerpts of Verdi's grand opera, "Il Trovatore." From the story of the life of this great Italian composer it will be recalled that this was one of the three operas that made their creator famous, and indeed it is one of the world's greatest grand operas. It was first produced at the Apollo, Rome, on January 19, 1853, and has since been produced in theatres the world over.

The principal characters are:—

MANRICO—A young troubadour of mysterious birth. (Tenor)
COUNT DI LUNA—A nobleman (Manrico's brother). (Baritone)
LEONORA—Loved by Di Luna and Manrico. (Soprano)
AZUCENA—A Gypsy woman, who passes as Manrico's mother. (Mezzo-soprano)
FERNANDO—A captain under Count Di Luna. (Bass)

It is interesting to note a story that is told of the opera, and its connection with some very fashionable opera patrons who once attended a fancy dress ball in the make-up of their favourite opera—"Il Trovatore." On being asked the story of the plot the amazing discovery was made that none of them had the faintest notion of what it was about. The plot is certainly intricate, and the outline we give must necessarily omit many of the details. Otherwise it would not be able to be followed.

MANRICO, hero of the fifteenth century wars, has returned to his home in Northern Spain, with all his blushing honours thick upon him, and, as though that were not enough, has just been proclaimed champion at the tournament and crowned victor by the lovely Countess Leonora. Small wonder that she should love him and he love her. But, as ever the course of their true love does not run smooth. Leonora's beauty has long appealed to the dissolute, arrogant Count di Luna, who holds sovereign sway over the district and all within it. He has marked her down as his prize, but as she is of birth as noble as his own, no simple abduction will avail him; he must force her to accept his hand in marriage. And this she will not do, since she loathes him as intensely as she loves her splendid soldier.

Manrico's birth is doubtful. He is generally supposed to be the son of the proud, handsome gypsy woman Azucena, whose fondness for the gallant youth might well seem to justify this assumption. But when Manrico visits his reputed mother in the gypsy encampment, she is impelled at last to reveal to him the truth. He is not her son, but the younger brother of the Count himself. He was once the child she had intended to destroy.

Then Azucena tells Manrico the whole tragic story. Her mother—also of gypsy blood,—was falsely accused of having bewitched the sickly infant son of the former Count di Luna, and was mercilessly burnt. Azucena, then a young woman, was infuriated at the atrocious treatment of her mother, and determined to have full revenge. She stole the ailing child and, as she thought, threw it on the still burning pyre, where it perished. But by some mischance her own child took the place of the noble baby; thus her revenge had recoiled on herself. Mourning her own loss, and

melted by the helplessness of the Count's innocent child, Azucena resolved to cure him and rear him as her own. Thanks to her care and devotion, the tiny boy had grown into Manrico; and to Azucena's love was now added an intense pride in his achievements. He had become as dear to her as though he were her own flesh and blood.

Disguised as a troubadour, Manrico serenades fair Leonora beneath her window, and there are many stolen love meetings between the devoted pair. When the Count at length discovers that he has a rival in Manrico, the cause of Leonora's coldness is explained, and his fury knows no bounds, especially when he thinks of the difference of rank he supposes to exist between them. It exasperates the proud nobleman to think that a lady of Leonora's rank should deign to stoop so low as to accept a base-born minstrel as lover.

The Count interrupts the lovers one night, and a fight ensues between the two men. Manrico is soon wounded, but despite his injury he vanquishes the aggressor, and has him at his mercy. Scorning to slay a disarmed man, he spares the discomfited Count, who goes off muttering threats of vengeance against Manrico, against Leonora, against Azucena. It is rumoured that Manrico has been killed in the duel. Leonora, hearing this, is broken-hearted and, tired of life without her lover, prepares to take the veil. The Count has plotted to abduct her outside the convent, but is once more foiled by Manrico, who by this time is at the head of a body of trusty followers.

Leonora and Manrico are compelled hastily to take refuge in the Castle of Castellar which is presently besieged by Di Luna and his vassals. In the end they prevail, the castle is stormed, Leonora escapes, but Manrico is taken and thrown into a tower cell. Azucena, too, has been captured by the son of her enemy, who has an evil joy at finding her at last in his power. He proclaims that she, like her mother before her, shall be burnt as a witch. They confine her in the same cell as Manrico.

News of the fate, that di Luna has arranged for his rival, comes to Leonora's ears and, demented with fear, she seeks out the fastness in which her lover is imprisoned. Standing beneath this tower which holds him in bondage, she hears him singing a farewell song, for on the morrow he is to die.

A last despairing hope springs into Leonora's breast. She will make a final fight to save Manrico, whatever the cost such an attempt may call for. It so happens that, with this intention planted firm in her heart, the Count di Luna comes upon her. She appeals to him for mercy, she tells him, when all other entreaties fail, that she will be his bride if he will but spare the man she loves. He, after at first refusing to listen to her anguished entreaties, finally promises to consent now she will marry him; so, thinking only of her lover's safety, the luckless girl definitely agrees to the cruel bargain.

Leonora is permitted to go to Manrico's cold dark dungeon, to tell him he is free. When he hears the hideous terms on which he is to regain his longed-for freedom, he concludes that Leonora, to avoid the Count's odious embraces, has taken poison. She dies in the arms of her lover, who, heart-broken, realises at last the extent of her devotion. Now he cares nought for life, and makes no attempt to escape.

The Count di Luna rushes in, and, finding Leonora dead, orders that Manrico be beheaded forthwith. Azucena is dragged off to witness the crime. As she falls, dying, to the ground, she tells the bewildered, horror-stricken oppressor that he has murdered his own brother. The gypsy has had full revenge.

THE opera contains many delightful airs and choruses. Of these the latter one stands out as being included among the most beautiful of the world's concerted numbers—it is the Gypsies or Anvil Chorus. We are, in the beginning of Act One, transported to the mountains of the Gypsies, and introduced to them singing in their forges. The number contains all the swing and rhythm that is necessary to make a perfect picture of the simple mountain folk welding their plow shares. In the background rings the metal as it is struck on the anvils. This number will be presented by Signor Cesaroni and Company at about 8.34 p.m.

Two other of the best known airs are the "Miserere" and "Home" (Concluded on page 21.)



Lucien Cesaroni