

One of Giuseppe Verdi's richest "middle period" scores, *La Forza del Destino* (*The Force of Destiny*) was written for the opera house in Saint Petersburg, Russia, in 1862. Not completely happy with certain aspects of *Forza*, Verdi revised it in 1869 for La Scala, and that has become the standard version we know today.

The story takes place in eighteenth-century Spain and Italy. Don Alvaro (tenor **José Carreras**) and his beloved, Leonora (soprano **Rosalind Plowright**), are about to elope when they are interrupted by her father, the Marquis of Calatrava (bass **John Tomlinson**). In the ensuing confrontation, Alvaro accidentally kills the Marquis, and the lovers flee. Leonora's brother, Don Carlos (baritone **Renato Bruson**), disguised as a student, dines with a group of female camp followers and muleteers. The gypsy fortune teller Preziosilla (mezzo-soprano **Agnes Baltsa**) is there to recruit soldiers for a war in Italy. Leonora, disguised as a boy, recognizes her brother; knowing he plans to kill her, she seeks refuge at a monastery headed by Padre Guardiano (bass **Paata Burchuladze**), who allows her to do penance living in a nearby cave as a religious hermit. Brother Melitone (baritone **Juan Pons**), a disagreeable lay monk, distributes food to the poor.

Alvaro, who thinks Leonora is dead, joins a regiment under an assumed name and saves the life of a comrade whom he has befriended; wounded in battle, he entrusts this friend with the destruction of a box containing private documents. Unbeknownst to Alvaro, the friend turns out to be Carlos, who's also serving under an assumed name. Carlos has sworn to avenge his father's death. His suspicions aroused, Carlos opens the box only to discover Leonora's portrait, confirming his suspicion that Alvaro is his enemy. Carlos challenges Alvaro to a duel, which is interrupted, and Alvaro seeks refuge at the same monastery where Leonora is now a hermit. Carlos tracks him down, resumes the fight, and is mortally wounded. Alvaro seeks absolution from the hermit (whom he initially doesn't recognize as Leonora). When Leonora goes to her dying brother, Carlos mortally wounds her, and Alvaro is left to contemplate a heavenly reunion with his beloved Leonora.

Giuseppe Sinopoli conducts the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Ambrosian Opera Chorus in this 1985 Deutsche Grammophon recording. The great American baritone **Leonard Warren** died onstage at the Metropolitan Opera on March 4, 1960, while singing Don Carlos' third act aria "Urna fatale del mio destino" during a performance of *Forza*: http://youtu.be/IR3McG_J_Ml.

This Saturday at 1:00 p.m. please join us for Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani*, live from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. Soprano **Olga Peretyatko** (Elvira Walton), tenor **Lawrence Brownlee** (Gualtiero Walton), baritone **Mariusz Kwiecien** (Riccardo Forth), and bass **Michele Pertusi** (Giorgio Walton) are the principals. **Michele Mariotti** conducts. Triangle Opera Studios' **Ken Smith** will join me in the studio between acts and before we run the delayed intermission features to ask for your new or ongoing financial support of these Met Opera broadcasts.

Next Thursday, May 8, please join me for Benjamin Britten's 1947 comedy *Albert Herring*, with tenor **Christopher Gillett** in the title role. Other principals are **Josephine Barstow** (Lady Billows), **Ann Taylor** (Nancy), **Delia Jones** (Mrs. Herring), and **Gerald Finley** (Sid). **Steuart Bedford** conducts the Northern Sinfonia in this 1997 recording.

The WCPE Opera House is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o'clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina, and we're streamed online at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>.

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Bob Chapman

W. Robert Chapman, Host of the WCPE Opera House