

ABRACADABRA!

Gypsies, Witches and Sorcerers In Opera

Chuck Lundeen



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Definitions

- WITCH: One credited with supernatural powers and special knowledge of evil and how to deal with it.
- GYPSY: In opera gypsies and witches are often interchangeable. One significant gypsy skill is the ability to forecast the future using palm readings or cards.

- Witches, gypsies, and sorcerers have appeared continually in theatrical and musical works since they were first used; they continue up to the present in Broadway musicals, plays, and television.

Dido and Aeneas
By Henry Purcell
1689

- Dido is the Queen of Carthage.
- Aeneas is a Trojan War hero who stops in Carthage.
- They marry, but Fate has other plans for Aeneas and uses the witches to bring them about.

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Gypsies, Witches and Sorcerers in Opera

5

Orphee et Eurydice
by Christoph W. Gluck
1764 French Version

- Orphee mourns the loss of his wife, Eurydice.
- Cupid tells him the Gods will allow him to go to Hades to bring his wife back to Earth.
- He must not look at her until they reach Earth.
- Orphee must plead with the FURIES to enter Hades to search for his wife.

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6

Die Zauberflote
The Magic Flute by W.A. Mozart
1791

- In Mozart's final opera he concentrates on the conflict between the powers of good & evil
- SARASTRO represents good/light
- QUEEN OF THE NIGHT, evil/darkness

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7

MACBETH
by Giuseppe Verdi
1847

- Witches predict that MACBETH will eventually become King of Scotland.
- These predictions set the tragic action into motion.

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8

IL TROVATORE
by Giuseppe Verdi
1853

- A Gypsy chorus sings of life and labor.
- Azucena tells of tragic events experienced by her mother and her.

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9

UN BALLO IN MASCHERA
A Masked Ball by Giuseppe Verdi
1859

- Ulrica, a gypsy/witch, has been criminally charged and ordered out of the community.
- The governor goes to see for himself who she is and what she does.

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Gypsies, Withces and Sorcerers in Opera

10

CARMEN
by Georges Bizet
1875

- Carmen tells one of her lovers, Don Jose, that their relationship will inevitably end up in death for both of them
- Carmen and her gypsy friends read the cards to predict the future

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11

HANSEL UND GRETEL
by Engelbert Humperdink
1893

- The two siblings are lost in a forest and come upon a delightful house all made from sweets
- They discover that the owner of the house isn't nearly as sweet as its exterior!

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Gypsies, Witches and Sorcerers in Opera

12