

The Richness of Rossini: Musical Examples      Class No. 5, Oct. 18, 2018  
 Examples are from YouTube unless otherwise noted

1.	Rossini: <i>Ermione</i>  Video Excerpts  Kultur DVD D2850	Ermione: Anna Caterina Antonacci Andromache: Diana Montague Orestes: Bruce Ford Pyrrhus: Jorge Lopez-Yanez Pylades: Paul Austin Kelly Phoenix: Gwynne Howell Cleone: Julie Unwin Cefisa: Lorna Windsor Attalus: Paul Nilon Astyanax: Oliver Bridge	Conductor: Andrew Davis Director: Graham Vick Glyndebourne Opera
2.	Rossini: <i>La Donna del Lago</i> ( <i>The Lady of the Lake</i> )  Video Excerpts  Image DVD: ID4363PUDVD	Elena: June Anderson Giacomo V: Rockwell Blake Rodrigo: Chris Merritt Duglas D'Angus: Giorgio Surjan Malcolm Groeme: Martine Dupuy Albina: Marilena Laurenza	Conductor: Riccardo Muti Director: Werner Herzog Teatro alla Scala

## Ermione: Synopsis

### CAST

Ermione (Hermione), daughter of Helen and Menelaus, betrothed to Pirro.  
 Andromaca (Andromache), widow of Hector  
 Pirro, (Pyrrhus) son of Achilles, and king of Epirus, betrothed to Ermione but in love with Adromaca  
 Oreste (Orestes), son of Agamemnon, in love with Ermione  
 Pilade (Pylades), Oreste's companion  
 Cleone, Ermione's confidante  
 Fenicio, Pirro's tutor  
 Cefisa, Andromaca's confidante  
 Attalo, Pirro's confidant  
 Astianatte (Astyanax), Andromaca's son (silent role)

Backstory: In the Trojan War, the Trojan hero Hector was killed by the Greek warrior Achilles. Hector's widow Andromache (Andromaca) and her young son Astyanax (Astianatte) are now captives of Achilles' son Pyrrhus (Pirro), who is in love with Andromaca.

Act 1: Scene 1: A dungeon in the palace: Astianatte sleeps while the prisoners continue their lament. Andromaca arrives and embraces her son. Attalo, Pirro's confidant, reminds her that Astianatte will be released if she can forget Hector, her dead husband, and give in to Pirro's advances. Fenicio, Pirro's tutor, fearing another outbreak of war, rebukes Attalo, and reluctantly tears Andromaca away from her son.

Scene 2: The gardens outside the palace; Cleone and some maidens invite Ermione to go hunting with them, but she is angry that Pirro has forsaken her and is courting Andromaca. Pirro arrives, expecting Andromaca, but she is not there. He sees Ermione and tries to escape, but she detains him and they quarrel. They are interrupted by a chorus of grandees, who announce the arrival of Agamemnon's son Oreste, to Pirro's alarm and Ermione's delight. Pirro recovers and leaves to arrange Oreste's reception; meanwhile, Ermione fears that Oreste's arrival will only lead to the marriage of Pirro and Andromaca.

Scene 3: The throne room in the palace Oreste, overwrought, appears with his friend Pilade, who tries to calm him. He declares his unrequited love for Ermione, but Pilade tells him that he must do his duty. A march announces the arrival of Pirro and Ermione, attended by Fenicio, Attalo, the grandees and guards. Andromaca also enters, but stays at the back of the stage. Oreste tells Pirro that he represents all the kings of Greece, who are agreed that Astianatte must die before he is able to avenge the death of his father Hector. Pirro defies Oreste, saying that he will do as he wishes, and that Astianatte may even share the throne with him. Andromaca and Ermione are aghast, Oreste warns Pirro that the Greeks will be angry with him, and Pilade vows that he will save Oreste from Pirro's anger.

Scene 4: The gardens outside the palace: Ermione tells Cleone that her love for Pirro has turned to hate. Oreste declares his love for Ermione, but she rejects him. Pirro arrives with the grandees and his retinue, who announce that he has changed his mind and will return to Ermione. In an attempt to force Andromaca's compliance, Pirro then tells Oreste, to the astonishment of everyone, that he will, after all, hand over Astianatte. As the guards prepare to do so, Andromaca pleads with Pirro to give her time to think. Ermione is furious, and Pirro again rejects her. Andromaca vows to commit suicide if she is compelled to marry Pirro, while Pilade urges Oreste to leave with him. The Act ends in general consternation.

Act 2: The palace's entrance hall: Andromaca arrives to tell Pirro that she will marry him. Overjoyed, he sends Attalo away to release Astianatte and make preparations for the wedding. Andromaca, unhappy, swears to herself that she will not be unfaithful to her dead husband, and while Pirro urges her to make her vows at the altar, she again resolves to kill herself.

Pirro leaves. Andromaca decides that, before she dies, she will make Pirro swear that Astianatte will be spared. Ermione, accompanied by Fenicio and Cleone, appears and insults Andromaca, who forgives her and departs. She asks Fenicio to tell Pirro that she still loves him, even if he is planning to desert her. He leaves, and Cleone tells Ermione that Pirro is not worthy of her. Ermione contemplates suicide.

Pirro appears in the gallery to the sound of a festive march, and he and the wedding procession pass by. Ermione swoons, but when her maidens and friends try to comfort her, she demands revenge. Oreste enters and tells her that he still loves her. She hands him a dagger and, trembling, he leaves to avenge her. She asks the gods to strengthen his arm, while Cleone and the chorus comment on her anguish. She rushes out in a fury, followed by the others.

Fenicio and Pilade meet, predicting Pirro's downfall if he goes ahead with his marriage to Andromaca. They leave in opposite directions. Ermione returns, extremely agitated. She does not know whether she loves or hates Pirro, and regrets ordering Oreste to kill him. Oreste appears, wild-eyed, stumbling and holding out the bloodstained dagger. He tells Ermione that she is avenged and describes how Pirro spared Astianatte and swore to make him his heir. Surrounded by angry soldiers drawing their swords, Pirro was attacked and killed, but not by Oreste, who says that he had given the dagger to another man and then reclaimed it. Ermione accuses Oreste of murder, and he realizes that she was still in love with Pirro. She asks the Eumenides (Furies) to destroy Oreste.

Pilade and his sailors arrive, telling Oreste to flee with them. At first he refuses, but as Ermione tells him that she hopes that he will drown, she faints. He asks thunderbolts and death to do their worst as Pilade and the men half-carry him to their ship.

## La Donna del Lago (The Lady of the Lake): Synopsis

### CAST

Elena (Ellen), Lady of the Lake  
Malcolm (Malcolm) Groome (Graeme), Rebel chieftain, Elena's lover (travesty role, i.e., sung by a woman)  
Uberto di Snowdon, alias of Giacomo V, Re di Scozia (King James V of Scotland), in love with Elena  
Douglas (Douglas) d'Angus, Elena's father, rebel and former tutor to King James  
Rodrigo (Roderick) di Dhu, Betrothed to Elena, rebel chief of the Highlanders  
Serano, Douglas's retainer  
Albina, Elena's confidante  
Bertram, Servant to the King

Place: Scotland

Time: First half of the sixteenth century

Act 1: Scene 1: The shores of Loch Katrine, with the Ben Ledi mountains in the background

Shepherds are watching flocks at dawn on the shore and men in the nearby forests are hunting. Elena appears in a boat on the lake and sings of her longing for her true love, Malcolm. At the edge of the lake, Elena hears the sound of horns and vainly hopes that Malcolm will be among the hunters. However, King James - who has disguised himself as "Uberto" in the hope of meeting the beautiful Elena - approaches from a distance, claiming to be a lost hunter. She offers him shelter and James accepts, and the two cross the lake towards Elena's home. As they sail off, the men in his entourage arrive, searching for the disguised King. Frustrated, they agree to widen the search and pray for guidance in finding their leader.

Scene 2: Douglas's home: Arriving at her father's home, Elena explains her simple life. But Uberto/King James sees insignias of his ancestors and learns that Elena's father is Douglas, the King's former tutor, who has since become a rebel whom James exiled from the court, a decision which in an aside he says he regrets. Elena's friends arrive and sing of her betrothal by her father to Rodrigo, chief of the Highlanders, a Scots tribe opposed to King James. Uberto/James becomes jealous. However, he suspects that Elena is not in love with Rodrigo. Directly, he asks if there is someone she loves, and learns there was only a brief episode in her past. Encouraged, he prepares to leave Elena's house and he and Elena expresses similar emotions. All leave as Elena goes inside.

Malcolm arrives, having decided to join the Highlanders. Alone, he recalls fond memories of Elena. Then he swears he will take her away from the strongest man or die in the attempt. Unseen, Malcolm then watches Elena and her father discussing her upcoming marriage to Rodrigo. She is reluctant, but Douglas orders her to obey his command. As he leaves, trumpets announce Rodrigo; Douglas orders Elena to follow him. Malcolm, who has overheard the conversation, approaches Elena and they pledge their undying devotion to each other. Together they leave.

Scene 3: The Highland warriors urge one another to fight, and welcome Rodrigo. He pledges to lead them to victory but, aside, expresses his urgent wish to see his future bride. His soldiers assure him he will win the hand of the woman he loves, as well as military victory. Douglas enters and he and Rodrigo greet one another, the latter fervently expressing his desire to see Elena. Acclaimed by the assembled crowd for her beauty, Elena enters. Rodrigo approaches, declaring his love. Concerned that she does not appear to respond, Douglas assures Rodrigo that she is restrained by modesty. Father, daughter and suitor each express their hopes, concerns and fears. Malcolm and his men arrive to join the Highlanders, demanding to be put to the test. Elena tries to hide her emotions, but her father Douglas immediately understands where her heart lies. At the same time, Rodrigo offers friendship to Malcolm and introduces Elena as his bride-to-be; but he, too, perceives a connection between Malcolm and Elena. In a quartet accompanied by the chorus of soldiers and women, each expresses his or her conflicting emotions. Abruptly, Douglas's aide Serano enters to warn of an attack by the King's forces. Rodrigo, Malcolm and the Highland warriors prepare to depart for battle.

Act 2

Scene 1: A thick wood with a cave. Uberto/King James has come to find Elena, hoping to save her from the coming battles. Meanwhile, Elena asks Serano to find her father, whom she expects to see before he goes off to fight. Serano leaves. Uberto/King James then approaches Elena and declares his love, but she tells him she loves Malcolm. Nevertheless, Uberto gives Elena a ring he says the King gave him and emphasizes that it will see her

through any danger. He prepares to leave, but Rodrigo steps forward, having overheard their exchange. Overwhelmed with rage and jealousy, Rodrigo orders his men to reveal themselves and kill this stranger. Elena pleads with Rodrigo's men, and Rodrigo decides to duel with Uberto himself. The two exit, Elena, trying in vain to calm them, follows.

Scene 2: The interior of the cave: Malcolm enters, looking for Elena, but finds only her companion Albina. Serano, her father's aide, joins them, explaining that Elena has gone in search of her father, Douglas, who is on a peace mission to the King's palace. Despondent at losing Elena, Malcolm seeks his own death. However, he is confronted by the arriving clansmen who announce that Elena's betrothed Rodrigo has been slain and the Highlanders face certain defeat. Malcolm leaves for the palace, determined to rescue Elena even if it means his life.

Scene 3: A room in the King's palace. Elena's father Douglas begs his former student King James for forgiveness, not for himself but for his daughter and those who helped him on the field of battle. The King refuses and orders him imprisoned. As Douglas is led away, the King is saddened by having to act so severely. Meanwhile, Elena has gained entry to the palace by showing her ring from "Uberto," and hopes to save her father, Malcolm and her betrothed Rodrigo (of whose death she is unaware). Suddenly, in the next room, she hears the voice of "Uberto" expressing love for her. When "Uberto" comes in, Elena is thrilled, certain he will help her gain an interview with the King.

Scene 4: The King's Throne Room: The two enter the throne room as members of the court join them. Elena, puzzled by the courtiers' behavior towards "Uberto," suddenly realizes that he is in fact King James. The King, softened by his affection for Elena, decides to forgive her father Douglas; but he makes a show of severity by condemning Malcolm. Finally, he relents and brings the young couple together. In her rondo finale, Elena rejoices in saving both her father and her true love, while everyone else rejoices that peace has been restored.