

# LEONORE ou L'Amour conjugal

Sunday, February 19, 2017, 3:00 p.m.  
Lisner Auditorium at the George Washington University



Ryan Brown, Conductor and Artistic Director  
*OPERA*  
*Lafayette*

Photo: Pierre-Etienne Bergeron





**Lisner Auditorium at the George Washington University**

Sunday, February 19, 2017, 3:00 p.m.



*presents*

**LÉONORE**  
**ou L'Amour conjugal**

**1798**

**A modern premiere**

**Pierre Gaveaux, composer**

**Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, librettist**

Opera in two acts, sung in French with English supertitles

Edition: Opera Lafayette

This performance will last approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes,  
with one 15-minute intermission.

Opera Lafayette is funded in part by the following organizations:



Opera Lafayette is grateful to David Frederick and Sophie Lynn as well  
as Nizam Kettaneh and Ishtar Méjanès for their generosity as  
Lead Sponsors of the filming of this modern premiere of  
Gaveaux and Bouilly's *Léonore, ou L'Amour conjugal*

## LETTER FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

The modern premiere of Gaveaux and Bouilly's *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal* is, in Julia Doe's words, "one of the most famous pieces of lyric theater that virtually no contemporary audience has ever witnessed." This alone would be reason for its revival. Even more, however, Gaveaux's score reveals itself to be a beautiful and inventive musical response to a story now well known to us through Beethoven's subsequent settings. While Beethoven had Bouilly's libretto to work with when Beethoven was creating his own *Léonore*, we do not yet know if Beethoven was familiar with Gaveaux's score. It's easy to hear how many of Beethoven's musical responses to the libretto are similar to Gaveaux's, however, even as Beethoven's writing is inestimably more complicated, and interesting to speculate which of these responses were part of the era's common musical parlance and which were original to Gaveaux and might have been inspiring to Beethoven. In any case, it is exciting to experience a moving and influential lyrical creation for the first time, and Opera Lafayette is pleased to be filming this production in order that the work may have an opportunity to be appreciated by the general public.

We thank you for your support, and look forward to seeing you for our spring production of Rameau!

Ryan Brown

### NEXT OPERA

Jean-Philippe Rameau's  
*Les Indes Galantes - Part 4*

Wednesday, May 31, 2017, 7:30 p.m.  
Lisner Auditorium at the  
George Washington University

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## CAST

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Kimy Mc Laren <sup>+</sup> .....       | <i>Léonore/Fidélio</i> |
| Jean-Michel Richer <sup>+</sup> .....  | <i>Florestan</i>       |
| Tomislav Lavoie <sup>+</sup> .....     | <i>Roc</i>             |
| Pascale Beaudin.....                   | <i>Marceline</i>       |
| Dominique Côté .....                   | <i>Pizare</i>          |
| Keven Geddes <sup>+</sup> .....        | <i>Jacquino</i>        |
| Alexandre Sylvestre <sup>+</sup> ..... | <i>Dom Fernand</i>     |

## ARTISTIC TEAM

|                                     |                                 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ryan Brown .....                    | <i>Conductor</i>                |
| Oriol Tomas <sup>+</sup> .....      | <i>Stage Director</i>           |
| Laurence Mongeau <sup>+</sup> ..... | <i>Set and Costume Designer</i> |
| Julie Basse <sup>+</sup> .....      | <i>Lighting Designer</i>        |

## OPERA LAFAYETTE ORCHESTRA

### Violin I

Claire Jolivet\*\*  
June Huang  
Theresa Salomon  
Anca Nicolau  
Elizabeth Field  
Nina Falk

### Violin II

Christof Richter\*  
Leslie Nero  
Gesa Kordes  
Annie Loud  
David McCormick<sup>+</sup>

### Viola

Paul Miller\*  
Kyle Miller

### Cello

Loretta O'Sullivan\*  
Nancy Jo Snider  
Alice Robbins  
David Bakamjian

### Contrabass

John Feeney\*

### Bassoons

Andrew Schwartz\*  
Anna Marsh

### Oboes

Marc Schachman\*  
Margaret Owens

### Clarinets

Nina Stern\*  
Ed Matthew

### Flutes

Sandra Miller\*  
Joseph Monticello<sup>+</sup>

### Horns

Todd Williams\*  
Linda Dempf

### Trumpets

John Thiessen\*  
Dennis Ferry

### Trombone

Garrett Lahr\*  
Liza Malamut<sup>+</sup>

### Percussion

Michelle Humphreys\*

\*Principal

\*\* Concertmaster

<sup>+</sup> Debut artists

## OPERA LAFAYETTE CHORUS

Andrew Adelsberger\*\*\*

Joseph Baker

Andrew Bearden Brown†

Jerry Kavinski

Bradley King

Joseph Regan

Jason Rylander

Antony Zwerdling

\*\*\* Soloist

†Debut artists

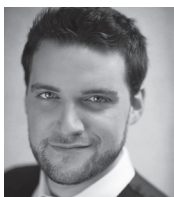
## BIOGRAPHIES



Opera Lafayette is an American period-instrument ensemble that specializes in French repertoire, rediscovers masterpieces, and creates a recorded legacy of its work. Founded in 1995 in Washington, DC, by Conductor and Artistic Director **Ryan Brown**, Opera Lafayette has earned critical acclaim and a loyal following for its performances and recordings with international singers renowned for their interpretations of baroque and classical operas. *The New York Times* has said, “Opera Lafayette ... has built a sterling reputation through specializing in rarities by Gluck, Grétry and the like.” Last season included Vivaldi’s *Catone in Utica*, Chabrier’s *Une Éducation Manquée*, and *Opera and the French Revolution*, which showcased dramatic scenes from Sacchini’s *Ceipe à Colone*, Cherubini’s *Médée*, and the modern premiere of Martini’s *Sapho*. The 20th anniversary season marked the beginning of producing a full season in both Washington, DC and New York, NY. At the invitation of Château de Versailles Spectacles, Opera Lafayette made its international debut at the Opéra Royal in February 2012 with the modern world premiere of Monsigny’s *Le Roi et le fermier*. France’s *Opéra Magazine* said, “This production should be noted and remembered in the annals of Versailles, for the intelligence of its staging, the beauty of its sets, and its high musical quality.” Opera Lafayette returned to Versailles for five sold-out performances of Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* and Philidor’s *Les Femmes Vengées* in 2014. Opera Lafayette’s discography on the Naxos label has expanded to 12 releases, including Gluck’s *Orphée et Euridice* (2005), Sacchini’s *Ceipe à Colone* (2006), Rameau Operatic Arias (2007), Lully’s *Armide* (2008), Rebel and Francœur’s *Zélindor, roi des Sylphes* (2009), Monsigny’s *Le Déserteur* (2010), Philidor’s *Sancho Pança* (2011), Grétry’s *Le Magnifique* (2012), Monsigny’s *Le Roi et le fermier* and Félicien David’s *Lalla Roukh* (2014), Philidor’s *Les Femmes Vengées* (2015), and most recently Grétry’s *L’Épreuve villageoise* (2016).



**Kimy Mc Laren (*Léonore, Fidélio*)** Canadian soprano Kimy Mc Laren makes her Opera Lafayette debut in the title role in this production of *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*. In the relatively short time since she made her professional stage debut with Opéra National du Rhin, Ms. Mc Laren has performed extensively worldwide and accrued a formidable and widely diverse repertoire comprised of opera, concert, recital, and musical theater. Ms. Mc Laren has performed more than thirty operatic roles, including Marguerite in *Faust*, Leïla in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Marie in *Wozzeck*, and The Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*. Recent engagements include Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* in Metz and Reims, the Fünfte Magd in *Elektra* in Montreal, Bach's *Weinachtsoratorium*, and Sondheim's *Passion* at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, where she was an enormously successful Julie Jordan in *Carousel*. She was immediately invited to return in the role of Cinderella in Sondheim's *Into the Woods*. Additionally, she has appeared as a soloist with an impressive number of symphony orchestras, including Orchestre Symphonique Montréal, Orchestre Métropolitain, Malaysian Philharmony, and Wiener Kammer Orchester. She is a prize winner in the International Mozart Competition in Salzburg and Mario Lanza Competition in Italy.



**Jean-Michel Richer (*Florestan*)** Canadian tenor Jean-Michel Richer makes his Opera Lafayette debut as Florestan in this production of *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*. Mr. Richer started his career outside Canada at the Chautauqua Music Festival, where he sang Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, the Chevalier de la Force in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and the title role of *Werther*. Recent and upcoming engagements include Les Feluettes with l'Opéra de Montréal, the Duke in *Rigoletto* at the Chautauqua Music Festival, Gonzalve in *l'Heure Espagnole* with Opera National de Lorraine, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* with Opéra de Montréal, and the revival of *Les Feluettes* with Pacific Opera Victoria and Edmonton Opera. Mr. Richer has taken part in several concerts with Studio de Musique Ancienne de Montréal, *I Musici*, and *l'ensemble Caprice*. His recital *Songs of Travel* with pianist Martin Dubé was awarded the Josef-Traxel scholarship in 2013. Mr. Richer is supported by the Jacqueline Desmarais Foundation, which enables him to pursue his vocal training with Marlina Kleinman Malas in New York. After studying trombone and singing in Montreal, he pursued his studies with the Music Academy of the West, the Canadian Vocal Arts Institute, and the Orford Arts Centre with Marilyn Horne, Warren Jones, Michel Sénéchal, Joan Dornemann, Edith Bers, and Tom Krause.





**Tomislav Lavoie (Roc)** Canadian bass Tomislav Lavoie makes his Opera Lafayette debut as Roc in this production of *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*. He recently sang *La Muette de Portici* with Opéra Comique, *La traviata* with Opéra de Montréal, *Un ballo in maschera* in Tours, Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, *Montezuma* in Montreal, *Castor et Pollux* with the Ensemble Pygmalion, *Faust* in Amsterdam, Lully's *Armide*, *Le Pré aux Clercs* at the Wexford Festival, *Elektra* conducted by Yannick Nézet-Seguin, and the world premiere of *Les Féluettes* with Opéra de Montréal. Future engagements include *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* in Cologne, *Die Zauberflöte* in Nice, *Alceste* in Lyon, *La Reine de Chypre* with Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, *La traviata* with Opéra national de Paris, a European tour of concerts with Les Siècles, and concerts with the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal. Mr. Lavoie is supported by the Fondation Cédric Ferguson and the Jeunesses Musicales du Canada. He studied at the Conservatoire de Musique in Montréal as a violinist before being hired by several famous orchestras, among which was the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec. When he replaced a singer in the part of Masetto in *Don Giovanni* after a last-minute cancellation, he decided to study singing at Université de Montréal. In his first year, he was appointed 'Young Lyrical Ambassador,' a distinction that allowed him to take part in several sessions and festivals in the Czech Republic.



**Pascale Beaudin (Marceline)** Canadian soprano Pascale Beaudin returns to Opera Lafayette as Marceline in this production of *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*. She was last seen as Denise in Opera Lafayette's 2015 production of *L'Épreuve villageoise*. She has appeared on operatic stages such as Opéra de Montréal, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Opéra de Québec, Angers-Nantes Opéra, Opéra de Marseille, Opéra national de Lorraine, and Opéra de Metz, in roles such as Zerlina, Papagena, Fiordiligi, Oscar, Adèle de Formoutiers, and Nannetta. In addition to being a permanent member of the Four Nations Ensemble, Ms. Beaudin collaborates with many orchestras, namely the Orchestre Métropolitain, l'Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, Les Violons du Roy, I Musici de Montréal, l'Ensemble contemporain de Montréal, la Société d'art vocal de Montréal, le Centre international de mélodie française de Tours, l'Orchestre régional de Cannes, the Lanaudière Festival, the Festival d'opéra de Québec, le Festival des musiques sacrées de Marseille, le Festival du Domaine Forget, and the Vancouver Early Music Festival. Ms. Beaudin is one of six singers featured on the critically acclaimed five-disc release *Mélodies complètes de Francis Poulenc* on the Atma label. She is also featured on the world premiere recording of Philidor's *Les femmes vengées* with Opera Lafayette on the Naxos label. She has received national recognition with government grants from the Canada Arts Council, the Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec, and the Jacqueline Desmarais Foundation.





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**Dominique Côté (Pizare)** Canadian baritone Dominique Côté returns to Opera Lafayette as Pizare in this production of *Léonore, ou L'Amour conjugal*. He was last seen as Pausanias in Opera Lafayette's 2016 production of *Une Éducation Manquée*. Mr. Côté's recent engagements include Feydeau's *Feu la mère de Madame* with Theatre Lac Brome, Frédéric in *Lakmé* with Opéra de Montréal, Dr. Falke in *Le Chauve-Souris* with le Grand Théâtre de Genève, Lieutenant Robert in Offenbach's *Le fille du tambour* in Chicoutimi, and a Canadian tour as Figaro in *The barber of Seville* with Jeunesses Musicales. Further credits include Opéra de Marseille, Pacific Opera Victoria, Musici de Montréal, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, and the title role in *Nelligan* for Festival Opéra de Québec. Mr. Côté has been seen as Renaud on Radio-Canada's *Virginie*, Eric Gaudry in *Jean-Duceppe* for Télé-Québec, and Étienne Bernard in *Emma* on the TVA network. Mr. Côté has won several first prizes, including the Concours International de chant de Canari and for operetta at the Concours International de chant de Marmande. He also received the first prize and the grand prize from the Voice Festival of McGill University.



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**Keven Geddes (Jacquino)** Canadian tenor Keven Geddes makes his Opera Lafayette debut as Jacquino in this production of *Léonore, ou L'Amour conjugal*. A native of Quebec City, Mr. Geddes is regularly invited by Opéra de Québec during their regular season and opera festival. With them, he sang the roles of the Messenger in *Il trovatore*, Filvitte in *L'imprésario*, Camille in *La veuve joyeuse*, and Spoletta in *Tosca*. Recently, he performed Roméo for the Jeunesses Musicales du Canada tour of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Upcoming engagements include the Aumônier au Carmel in Opéra de Montréal's production of *Dialogue des Carmélites* and Don José with Orchestre symphonique de Longueuil in their production of *Carmen*. He will also be singing Rachmaninov's *Vespers* with Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal, Handel's *Messiah* with Orchestre symphonique de Laval, and Gounod's *St. Cecil Mass* with Choeur de l'Orchestre symphonique de Sherbrooke. He will be completing his second year at the Opéra de Montréal's Atelier lyrique this spring.



**Alexandre Sylvestre (*Dom Fernand*)** Canadian bass-baritone

Alexandre Sylvestre makes his Opera Lafayette debut as Dom Fernand in this production of *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*.

Recent and upcoming engagements include a remount of *Silent Night* with Michigan Opera Theatre, Colline in *La bohème*, the premiere of *Les Feluettes* with Opéra de Montréal, Timur in

*Turandot* with Calgary Opera, and Mozart's Requiem with Orchestre symphonique de Québec. Mr. Sylvestre has been heard in *L'enfant et les sortilèges* with Opéra de Québec, Bartolo in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Edmonton Opera, Brahms' Requiem with Symphony Nova Scotia, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with Orchestre symphonique de Sherbrooke, Kevin Puts' *Silent Night* with Opéra de Montréal, Brander in *La damnation de Faust* with Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, and Haly in *L'Italiana in Algeri* with Calgary Opera. Other concert engagements include Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia* at Festival Lanaudière, *Die Schöpfung* with Symphony Nova Scotia, Haydn's *Stabat Mater* with Les Violons du Roy, and Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle* with the Taiwan National Choir in Taipei. A native of Quebec, he studied at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal where he was awarded the "Premier Prix avec Grande Distinction."



**Ryan Brown (*Conductor*)** Ryan Brown is the Founder and

Artistic Director of Opera Lafayette, and conductor of this production of *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*. Through his work with Opera Lafayette, he has gained an international reputation for his

interpretations of French opera and for his role in the revival of significant works from the 18th and 19th centuries. His repertoire and discography of 12 recordings for Naxos include operas by well-known 18th-

century composers (Gluck and Rameau), as well as rediscoveries of their contemporaries (Sacchini and Rebel/Francœur), works which exemplify traditions established in the 17th century (Lully and Charpentier), and those which point the way toward the music of the 19th century (Monsigny and Grétry). He was widely lauded for the modern premiere and recording of Félicien David's 1862 *Lalla Roukh*, a seminal work of musical Orientalism. His frequent performances of Italian works by Haydn, Mozart, Paisiello, and Cimarosa have also met with great acclaim. In 2012, Mr. Brown led Opera Lafayette in its international debut at the Opéra Royal in Versailles with Monsigny's *Le Roi et le fermier*. In 2014, he returned to the Opéra Royal, leading Opera Lafayette in Philidor's *Les Femmes Vengées* and Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. In 2015, he conducted Vivaldi's *Catone in Utica* at the Glimmerglass Festival. He is a recipient of *La Médaille d'Or du Rayonnement Culturel* from La Renaissance Française. Mr. Brown was raised in a musical family in California, and performed extensively as a violinist and chamber musician before turning his attentions to conducting.



**Oriol Tomas (*Stage Director*)** Oriol Tomas makes his Opera Lafayette debut as the stage director for this production of *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*. During this season, he will stage Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and Verdi's *La traviata*. He recently directed Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* for the Jeunesses Musicales du Canada, and created *From Silver Screen to the Opera*, an innovative project for Opéra de Montréal. During the past seasons, Mr. Tomas directed Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Handel's *Rodelinda* with Pacific Opera Victoria, and three productions with Opéra de Montréal: Rossini's *Le barbiere de Séville*, Strauss' *La Chauve-Souris*, and Verdi's *Il trovatore*. For the Atelier Lyrique de Opéra de Montréal, he directed Menotti's *The Consul* in collaboration with the National Theatre School of Canada, Bernstein's *Trouble in Tabiti*, *Noël à l'Opéra* with the Orchestre Métropolitain, Menotti's *The Telephone*, and two of his own creations: *Le Quatrième Enfant-Lune*, composed by Gabriel Thibaudeau, and *Aleacanto*, programmed in the PDA junior series of the Place des Arts de Montréal. In addition to sitting on many juries, he has taught acting techniques to the singers of l'Atelier Lyrique de Opéra de Montréal, Ottawa University, Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, Pacific Opera Victoria's Young Artist Program, the Académie de Musique du Domaine Forget and the Folyestivale. Mr. Tomas is a recipient of the first prize of the Concours du Centre Français de Promotion Lyrique. He graduated from l'Université du Québec à Montréal with a degree in acting in 2003 and a master's degree in operatic stage direction in 2008. He also studied stage direction and theatrical theory at l'Université Laval in Québec.



**Laurence Mongeau (*Set and Costume Designer*)** Laurence Mongeau makes her Opera Lafayette debut as the set and costume designer for this production of *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*. A trained designer of costumes and sets, Ms. Mongeau works internationally in theater, circus, special events, and opera. For the current season, she is designing costumes for *The Magic Flute* with the Pacific Opera Victoria and *La traviata* with the Jeunesses Musicales of Canada. For several years, she has been working with stage director Oriol Tomas in France, the United States, and Canada. She has designed the costumes for Sauguet's *Les Caprices de Marianne*, which was performed in about fifteen opera houses in France, including Capitole of Toulouse, Opéra de Marseille, Opéra d'Avignon, and Opéra National de Bordeaux. For the past five years, Ms. Mongeau has been assisting scenographer James Lavoie in several projects in Canada, the United States, Chile, Mexico, and Peru. Together, they have created among others *Joya*, *Les Chemins invisibles (Le Hangar des oubliés and La Frontière des pixels)* for the Cirque du Soleil, as well as *Sherlock Holmes* and *Grease*, staged by Andrew Shaver. Ms. Mongeau trained at the National School of Theater of Canada.



**Julie Basse (*Lighting Designer*)** Julie Basse makes her Opera Lafayette debut as the lighting designer for this production of *Léonore, ou L'Amour conjugal*. Ms. Basse has designed lighting for several theatrical productions, including *Polyglotte*, *Beauté intérieure*, *Koalas*, *Orphée Karaoké*, *Un animal*, *Immigrant de l'intérieur*, *Siri* by Maxime Carboneau and Laurence Dauphinais, *Hänsel et Gretel* with Opéra de Montréal, *Roméo et Juliette* with The Jeunesses Musicales, and *Cinéma à l'opéra* with l'Atelier lyrique de Montréal. She tours with Les soeurs Boulay, and has created the lighting design for many music bands: La Bronze, Quartango, Jean-François Malo, and Lecavalier. She regularly works with the dance collectives Dans son salon and La Marche du Crabe. She has collaborated as a lighting designer for improvised theater since 2012 with la Ligue d'Improvisation Montréalaise (LIM), Cinplass, and Créations Instables. Ms. Basse graduated from the National Theatre School of Canada.

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Nichole Chaney, *Stage Manager*

Emilie Martel, *Assistant Director*

Tim Jones, *Prop Master*

Patrick Kilbride, *Surtitled Operator*

Nancy Jo Snider, *Orchestra Manager*

Joan McFarland, *Chorus Manager*

Elizabeth Chapman, *Wardrobe*

Leslie Nero, *Music Librarian*

## SYNOPSIS

Marceline, daughter of Roc the jailer and the laundress for the prisoners, joyously anticipates the possibility of marrying Fidélio, the young man who now works for her father. Marceline's longtime suitor, Jacquino, arrives and tries again to woo her, but to his annoyance and Marceline's relief, he is interrupted several times by knocking at the door. Marceline's father Roc, enters, rebuffs Jacquino, and asks about Fidélio. Fidélio arrives, having secured a very good bargain for work Roc has asked him to arrange. Roc is especially pleased, and speaks approvingly of Fidélio becoming part of the family, indicating that it takes both love and money to make a good marriage.

Fidélio declares marriage the highest good, but also that he is disappointed Roc has not shown enough confidence in him to allow him to help the jailer with his most difficult tasks in the bottom dungeons of the prison. Roc says he is under strict orders not to let anyone see the prisoners of the state who are put there, but should the Governor of the prison, Pizare, allow Fidélio to help Roc in the dungeons, there is still one prisoner he surely will not be allowed to see, one who has been there for two years and whom Pizare has ordered Roc to slowly starve.

Pizare enters and receives a letter from an informant which says that the Minister of the region suspects there may be victims of arbitrary power held in the prison and will arrive soon for a surprise inspection. Pizare orders a trumpeter to the tower to announce the Minister's arrival as soon as he is seen on the road, fearing the Minister may discover that Pizare has imprisoned his own personal and political enemy, Florestan. He resolves to kill Florestan before the Minister arrives.

Roc re-enters with Marceline and Fidélio, but Pizare tells Roc to follow him. Marceline speaks of marriage to Fidélio, but notices Fidélio is uncomfortable and preoccupied. Marceline leaves to do her work. Fidélio (Léonore) is left alone, pondering her choice to disguise herself as a young man in the hope that she may be able to find her husband alive in the prison. Roc re-enters again to tell Fidélio that the Governor has allowed him to take the young man to the lower dungeons so that they may quickly dig out a cistern to be used as a grave for the prisoner, whom a masked man will soon finish off.

Meanwhile, the prisoners are brought into the courtyard for their daily hour of fresh air.

Florestan, alone in the darkest and most remote dungeon, bemoans his fate, thinks of his wife Léonore, and falls unconscious. Roc and Fidélio enter the dungeon and begin to dig out the cistern. Fidélio struggles to better see or hear the prisoner. When Fidélio (Léonore) recognizes that it is her husband, she keeps her identity hidden, but persuades Roc to allow her to give the prisoner a piece of bread. Pizare arrives,

but masked, and orders Roc and Fidélio to leave. Before they are gone, he begins to strike Florestan, but Fidélio throws herself in front of Florestan to protect him, and reveals herself to all as Léonore, his wife. Pizare unmask himself and orders Roc to separate Léonore from Florestan. Léonore draws a pistol, but just then the trumpet call is heard. Pizare rushes out to prepare to meet the Minister, vowing to finish off Florestan later. Roc follows, first taking Léonore's pistol from her. Léonore faints.

Florestan calls to Léonore and she awakens. They then hear a chorus in the distance calling for vengeance, and, fearing again for their lives, prepare to die. They are joyfully surprised when it is the Minister, Dom Fernand, who arrives to set them free. Dom Fernand orders Pizare punished, and the innocent prisoners join everyone in blessing the day and celebrating the love and courage of Léonore.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### *Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*

by Julia Doe, Assistant Professor of Music  
*Historical Musicology, Columbia University*

*Léonore, ou L' Amour conjugal*, with a text by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly and music by Pierre Gaveaux, is one of the most famous pieces of lyric theater that virtually no contemporary audiences have ever witnessed. This opéra comique, which premiered at the Parisian Theatre Feydeau in 1798, is emblematic of a persistently neglected category of dramatic repertory—the dialogue opera of the French revolutionary period. It also, of course, provided the source material for an object of widespread renown and sustained scholarly fascination: *Fidelio*, the sole surviving (and much revised) opera of Ludwig van Beethoven. Bouilly and Gaveaux's *Léonore* is thus a work with a uniquely bifurcated historical identity. On the one hand, its plot and musical idiom are tied closely to the time and place of its creation; it betrays a clear debt to the conventions of classical-era opéra comique and to the specific political circumstances of the late 1790s. On the other hand, the opera's abstract and broadly generalizable themes—of the strength of conjugal devotion and the necessity for rebellion against unjust persecution—would prove eminently adaptable, exerting an enduring hold on the popular imagination in France and throughout 19th-century Europe.

*Léonore* was described by its librettist as a 'fait historique.' The term refers to a sub-category of French opera developed during the final decades of the 18th century, featuring plots "ripped from the headlines" or otherwise based upon acts of contemporary heroism. In his (sometimes spurious) memoirs, Bouilly—a lawyer turned playwright—publicized the work by emphasizing its veracity. He claimed that

the drama was inspired by an event that occurred during the revolutionary reign of Terror. While employed as a civil servant in central France, he had witnessed a “sublime deed of bravery and devotion by one of the ladies of the Touraine, whose noble efforts I had the happiness of assisting.” The details of the incident, while plausible, are impossible to verify. And it should be noted that the author’s own reputation stood to benefit in association with that of his theatrical doppelgänger—if he “assisted” the efforts of a real-world Léonore, Bouilly implied that he himself served as the model for the libretto’s prime symbol of justice and authority, the benevolent minister Dom Fernand. Moreover, if *Léonore* contains a grain of historical truth, it simultaneously (and rather conveniently) exemplifies many of the most popular plot archetypes of contemporaneous French theater. The theme of dramatic rescue from captivity was unsurprisingly ubiquitous in the years surrounding the fall of the Bastille, as was the dramatic condemnation of arbitrary tyranny. (Prison scenes abound in works of the period, from Monsigny’s *Le déserteur* to Dalayrac’s *Raoul, Sire de créqui*. The evil Dourlinski in Cherubini’s *Lodoiska* is but one obvious predecessor to *Léonore*’s power-mad villain Dom Pizare.)

Gaveaux’s score for *Léonore* looks both backwards and forwards, blending tuneful, old-regime idioms with more complicated numbers reflective of the rapidly evolving aesthetic of the 1790s. The stylistic language of Roc, Marceline, and Jacquino remains largely within the conventions of the pre-revolutionary age. These comic characters express themselves in a rustic patois and in a series of popularly-infused strophic forms. Case in point is Marceline’s opening love song, “Fidélío, mon doux ami,” a set of minor-mode couplets with major-mode refrain. But Gaveaux had also thoroughly absorbed the developments of the revolutionary decade, as evidenced, in particular, by his expansive approach to choral music and his inclusion of styles borrowed from the realm of lyric tragedy. (Gaveaux was both a composer and a star actor at the Theatre Feydeau. Originating leading roles in several touchstone works of the period, including Cherubini’s *Lodoiska* and *Medée*, and Steibelt’s *Roméo et Juliette*, had granted him a first-hand fluency in the latest trends in modern operatic writing.) Notable in this regard is the ensemble that concludes the opera’s first act (“Que ce beau ciel”), which is sung by male captives who gradually fill the stage, and which provides a clear model for the famous “prisoner’s chorus” (“O welche Lust”) at the parallel moment in Beethoven’s *Fidelio*. Also innovative are the serious, *obbligato* recitative and romance performed by Florestan as the curtain rises in Act II. The declamatory vocal style, dark C-minor tonality, and evocative orchestral effects create a foreboding tone reminiscent of the tragédie lyrique. (Gaveaux requests the horns play “bell to bell”—a technique that Gluck had used to represent the soundscape of the underworld in his Parisian *Alceste*.) Indeed, the prison scenes of *Léonore* were so somber that they threatened to compromise the very identity of the comic genre; as one commentator noted, it was a “strange verbal misuse” to categorize Bouilly and Gaveaux’s work as an opéra comique.



*Léonore* was met with critical acclaim after its Parisian premiere. *The Journal de Paris* was hard-pressed to name another opera in memory that had achieved “so complete and universal a success,” while the *Censeur dramatique* highlighted the “astonishing” musical effects and the “nuanced” and “forceful” dramatic construction of the title character. The popularity of the work soon inspired a number of adaptations for export outside of France. Ferdinando Paer and Simon Mayr set Italian translations in 1804 and 1805, respectively; Beethoven received a German version of Bouilly’s libretto for production in Vienna that same year. (He would revise his opera, with new and altered texts, in 1806 and 1814.) What is perhaps most remarkable about *Léonore* is the manner in which its themes have been successively and broadly reimagined, divorced from the very specific historical and geographical circumstances of their initial conception. Bouilly and Gaveaux’s opera was written in the aftermath of the Revolution’s most radical phase, the Terror of 1793-94. Its metaphors of liberation should thus be read not as commentary on the fallen regime of the Bourbon monarchs, but on that of Robespierre and the Jacobins. (The Theatre Feydeau had a solid reputation for royalist sentiments, and Gaveaux was the author of a well-known, anti-terror anthem, *Le reveil du peuple*.) By 1814, the finalized *Fidelio* of Beethoven had acquired an entirely new political resonance: its plot was largely viewed as a paean to the toppling of Napoleon, and its exuberant finale as a hymn to the reinstatement of European stability after the Congress of Vienna. Central to both of these (and many subsequent) interpretations of *Léonore*’s fundamental themes is what the historian Paul Robinson has called a “right-angled conception of history,” a transition from the old order to the new that is achieved only through struggle, and therein derives much of its enduring—and inspirational—appeal.

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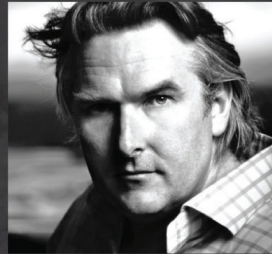
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