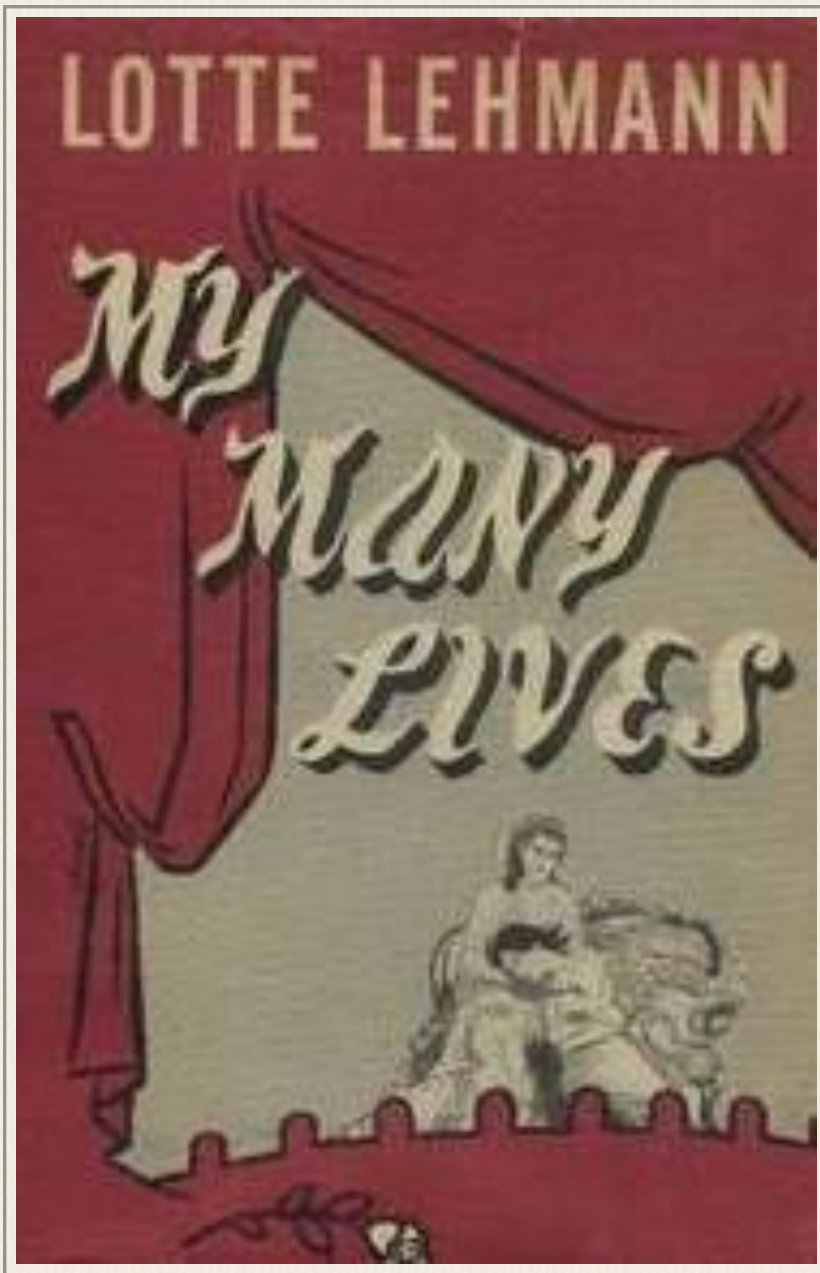




Aria Suggestions



Lehmann drew the cover for her book about her signature opera roles.

1. Mon coeur s'ouvre... *Samson*
2. Connais tu le pays *Mignon*
3. Pleurez, pleurez mes yeux *Le Cid*
4. *Fidelio* (the whole opera)

Here are Lehmann's ideas about various opera arias that were not included in her book *My Many Lives*, which focused on her most important roles. These arias are in random order. In the transcriptions of her handwriting, I have taken the liberty of correcting some of Lehmann's spelling, but have left her word order in tact.

Aria of Dalila:
"Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix" (Saint-Saëns)

Be from head to toe the
enchantress... you lean at
the piano (don't stand
there next and with
square elbow!!!) Your body
~~shows~~ a lovely line,
as if you start to walk
in seductive gracefulness
over the stage. You start
the aria very subdued,
with sweetest *pianissimo*.
It is a soft and subtle
crescendo until "l'aurore".

you talk of the flower (2
which opens to the
morning sun. your crescendo
symbolises this opening:
feel the floating sweetness
in it, imagine if you
would draw what you
are singing, this line:

"sun baisers" - take im-
mediately the thought
of the sunblosses into
your own feeling... Eve-
rything in nature
seems to be a part

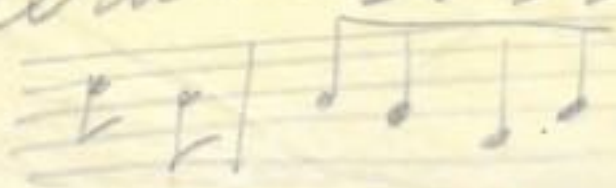
of your glowing desire... (B)
The intermissive music
(Two bars) use for a
leaning back, so that
you can start, Mais,
"à mon bien aîné" with
a movement forward.
(This play of leaning
back and forward goes
through the whole
aria. It brings the
impression of ac-
tivity without over-
stepping the limit

which the concert platform⁽⁴⁾
naturally demands. But
singing an aria in a
concert is something
which has to be com-
promised: you have to
give the idea of
singing. Not with your
hands, not with real
movements, but with
the suggestion of both.
Tu Mais, à mon bien aimé
sing with more vivid-
ness. And give a quiet
lovely musical line
a petit nuage sécher mes

pleurs? Your voice has
developed into a
warm mezzo-forte. Go
back into a subito
piano: "que la voix
parle encore..." Think:
oh his voice has
made me happy, I
heard out of the
sore of his voice
that he has ser-
ved to my charm.
Your eyes are closed,
singing like a whisper,
your body sways

back in the two bars (6
which follow. "Dis —
moi" you put forward
again, your hands
seem to stretch out —
in the desire to grip
his hands. A great
and accelerando cu-
scendo to "j'ai maîs."
Then go back with
voice, hands, body
and come slowly
forward ^{beginning piano} "Ah, responds
à ma tendresse." Sing
"Tendresse" with a sweet

sensual quality of the
voice. Crescendo in
power and expression
until "Ah, rose moi."
But take your time and
try to calm down
inwardly before this
clysma. It is impor-
tant that you sing
the high notes with
a warm and broad
force. Give a passionate
accelerando and for-
gato



and throw yourself [8
so to speak into
"livresse." Play with
the word: with the
H, with the S.

Four bars of the music
between the two verses
are in the same
mood of your first
verse. Feel the flavor
of music with you
body. The next two
bars (~~3/4~~ ^{3/4}) have something
new: a glittering

and iridescent move-⁽¹⁹⁾
ment. You have seen in
Samson's eye that he
is not quite your
victim yet. You - the
experienced eucha-
reist - try now an
other way of sedu-
cing. The whole scale
seems to be at
your demand...
Your voice takes now
a silvery light
quality, your eyes

loose the heavily 110
sensual dreamy look.
Like a bird — light,
bodyless, in dancing
gait — so you start
the second verse. The
tempo is naturally
somewhat quicker
than the first verse.
Play with the French
words, take advantage
of their playful
elegance!
"Ainsi fêlent mon

coeur" with subdued III
passion. (Play with the
it in French!). Sing
quietly "vict à se
causaler." (When there
is a sentence ahead
which has to be very
expressive, you bring
this ~~more~~ better to
life if you try to
sing the phrase before
quiet. If you sing ever
tryingly excitedly, then
there are no lights and
depth — and only

those make you it. (12
mission colorful and
interesting.)

"à la voix", qui m'est
chère" has the same
sensuality like in
the first verse. Every
word is a caress, every
word is a mirror of
your burning desire.
The next phrases, "La

flèche est ma main pa-
vide" have a very dis-
tinctive accelerated

and increased passion. (13
Why? : I imagine that
you see, Samson does
not succumb yet.
Perhaps even he
tries to turn away
his eyes, tries to
escape your dangerous
charm. But you, as-
suming to victory,
hold him back with
the power of your
passion. Sing very
dramatically, with

a superior execution after
himself until "dau
ter bras" (First time).
The repetition "à voler
dau ter bras" has
a sfarsata in every
note. It is as if
you draw him into
your arms. He is
conquered, he is
yours now. And now
you sing in a broad
floating line the
last phrases of

the aria. Start "repounds"¹¹⁵
"à ma tendresse" piano
so that you have the
possibility of a great
crescendo until "li-
vresse." The two
"Samson, Samson" are
intoxicated - eyes
closed, body swaying
backwards. "Je t'ai me"
in a beautiful crescendo.
It is like a cry
of passionate triumph.

Watch your breath here: 16.
it is better to shorten
the high tone and
end with a broad
forte, instead of
giving out too much
and then being
breathless on the
end. The public
must have the
impression that
you could hold the
tone as long as you

(17)

want to...

General remark,
avoid to give the
impression of square-
ness. Your arms, your
hands have to be
supple and expressive.

Transcription of Lehmann's Suggestions for Dalila's aria for a concert performance.

Aria of Dalila: "Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix"

Saint-Saëns

Be from head to toe the enchantress... You lean at the piano (don't stand there erect and with square elbows!!!). Your body shows a lovely line, as if you start to walk in seductive gracefulness over the stage. You start the aria very subdued, with sweetest pianissimo. It is a soft and subtle crescendo until "l'aurore." You talk of the flower which opens to the morning sun. Your crescendo symbolizes this opening: feel the floating sweetness in it, imagine, if you would draw what you are singing, this line: [See Lehmann's drawing]

"Aux baisers" – take immediately the thought of the sunrises into your own feeling... Everything in nature seems to be a part of your glowing desire... The intermissive music (two bars) use for a leaning back, so that you can start "Mais, ô mon bien-aimé" with a movement forward. (This play of leaning back and forward goes through the whole aria. It brings the impression of acting without overstepping the limit which the concert platform naturally demands.) But singing an aria in a concert is something which has to be compromised: you have to give the idea of acting. Not with your hands, not with real movements, but with the suggestion of both.

"Mais, ô mon bien-aimé" sing with more vividness. And give a quite lovely musical line "Pour mieux sécher mes pleurs." Your voice has developed now into a warm mezzoforte. Go back into a subito piano: "Que ta voix parle encore!"

Think: oh his voice has made me happy, I heard out of the tone of his voice that he has succumbed to my charm." Your eyes are closed, sing like a whisper, our body sways back in the two bars which follow. "Dis-moi" you bend forward again, your hands seem to stretch out – in the desire to grip his hands. A great and accelerando crescendo to "jamais!"

Then go back with voice, hands, body and come slowly forward, beginning pianissimo, "Ah! réponds à ma tendresse!" Sing "tendresse" with a sweet sensual quality of voice. Crescendo in power and expression until "Ah, verse mois." But take your time and try to calm down inwardly before this climax: it is

important that you sing the high notes with a warm and broad forte. Give a passionate accelerando and sforzato [see Lehmann's music] and throw yourself so to speak into "livresse." Play with the word: with the "r", and the "s."

Four bars of the music between the two verses are in the same mood of your first verse. Feel the flow of music with your body. The next two bars (3/4 tact) have something new: a glittering and iridescent movement. You have seen in Samson's eyes that he is not quite your victim yet. You – the experienced enchantress – try now another way of seduction. The whole scale seems to be at your demand...

Your voice takes now a silvery light quality, your eyes lose the heavily sensual dreamy look. Like a bird – light, bodiless, in dancing gayety – so you start the second verse. The tempo is naturally somewhat quicker than the first verse. Play with the French words, take advantage of their playful elegance!

"Ainsi frémit mon cœur" with subdued passion. (Play with the "r" in "frémit !)

Sing quietly "prêt à se consoler." (When there is a sentence ahead which has to be very expressive, you bring this better to life if you try to sing the phrase before quiet. If you sing everything excitedly, then there are no heights and depth – and only those make your expression colorful and interesting.)

"À ta voix qui m'est chère!" has the same sensuality like in the first verse. Every word is a caress, every word is a mirror of your burning desire. The next phrases "La flèche est moins rapide" have a very distinctive accelerando and increased passion. Why? : imagine that you see, Samson does not succumb yet. Perhaps even he tries to turn away his eyes, tries to escape your dangerous charms. But you, accustomed to victory, hold him back with the power of your passion. Sing very dramatically, with a superior sourness of yourself until "dans tes bras. (First time).

The repetition "à voler dans tes bras" has a sforzato on every note. It is as if you draw him into your arms. He is conquered, he is yours now. And now you sing in a broad floating line the last phrases of the aria. Start "réponds à ma tendresse" piano so that you have the possibility of a great crescendo until "livresse." The two "Samson, Samson" are intoxicated – eyes closed, body swaying backwards. "Je t'aime" is a beautiful crescendo. It is like a cry of passionate triumph. Watch your breath here: it is better to shorten the high tone and end with a broad forte, instead of giving out too much and then being breathless on the end.

The public must have the impression that you could hold the tone as long as you want to...

General remark: avoid to give the impression of squareness. Your arms, your hands have to be supple and expressive.



An extended version of this aria's suggestions in Lehmann's handwriting follows.

Connais tu le Pays

Thomas

You know the story: Wilhelm Meister, the young gentleman, who has saved you, the girl Mignon, - from the brutalities of your master, is eager to know from what country you have come.

Remember: no one has ever been kind to you. Wilhem is the first person to show you friendliness, the first one to show any concern about your well being. Your gratitude and adoration are boundless. Secretly you have stolen away from your watchful master, to seek Wilhelm. You want to thank him, to give him some flowers which you have found in the meadow. They are all that you possess. Wilhelm touched and deeply moved, takes the flowers from you. He wants to help you, to free you from the slavery of your dreadful existence. He wants to take you back to that house which was once your home, from which you were stolen and given as a slave to a tribe of cruel gypsies. But you can't give any definite answer to his questions. You don't know your name, or your age, or the country from which you have come. You can only tell him of your vague dreams with their fleeting images of your childhood which seem to form more and more vividly and kindle your burning longing for your homeland and your father's house to flame.

The prelude expresses your slow awakening to the images of your past. You stand with your head bowed, - raise it very slowly. Your eyes seem to emerge as from a deep dream.



This music is the first really clear recollection of the pictures which are buried in your subconscious mind. Like glittering rays of the sun this music penetrates your mind, sunrays which sparkled everywhere in the sunny land where you spent your childhood.

Start to sing very piano with a dreamlike expression. Follow every new thought, every new picture which comes to you with increasing expression. React with your eyes - smile with all your heart in delighted remembrance. With "sous un ciel toujours bleu" the last rays of the sun seem to caress the image of the lovely country which you see before you as a radiant image. Then coming back to reality you sigh deeply - "Hélas"! All your longing, all your hopelessness is expressed in your regret that you can never follow him, your knight, your saviour to the happy land from which fate has snatched you. You see Wilhelm so as a person blessed with happiness and all of life's treasures, that you can only imagine him on the way to this beautiful homeland... Sing "c'est là," with a soft longing piano and then sing with emotion the outbreak of your desire. (But save the utmost of expression for the second verse. If you sing the first verse with too much abandon you will rob yourself of the possibility of a real climax.)

In the interlude your eyes should seek to penetrate still further the haze of your awakening memory.



This music is, so to speak, like the raising of a curtain. Suddenly you see clearly before you - the house. Great excitement seizes you. With quickened tempo, increased expression and vividness you paint the pictures which float before you. Pillars of marble - a glorious hall, a beautiful room all in gold with statues of white marble, which when you were a little child, sometimes frightened you as you passed them. They always seemed to call to you - and they call to you now and stretch out their arms toward you, consoling and pitying you. And there in the wonderful park, is a lake. You remember all the boats which floated there in the moonlight. They glistened and shimmered with flowers and gaily colored paper lanterns. And under a great tree on a wide terrace people danced in beautiful gowns. Perhaps you remember vaguely the lovely lady who was your mother. Perhaps you see her dancing, dreamlike, in a wide floating gown of shimmering brocade.

But you know that everything is unreal, a dream, an image of your phantasy.

With increased longing and desperate desire you sing - "Hélas ! Que ne puis-je te suivre.." Sing "c'est là !" with a long drawn sliding up, going from a breathy pianissimo in a broad crescendo which expands into a glowing, warm, floating forte !

Slide up

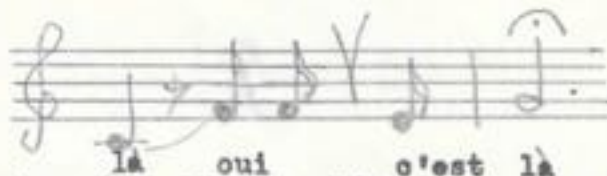


Do this sliding



very distinctly.

The very last sentence sing in one breath and then breathe -



in other words breathe after "oui" and hold the "là" in a long fading pianissimo.

Connait tu le pays.

Thomas.

you know ^{the story} ~~that~~ Wilhelm Kler's son
the young ^{gentleman} who has
saved you ^{the girl Mignon} from the brutalities
of your master, wants to know
from which country you came.
~~you know the opera "Mignon"~~
~~and it is not necessary~~
~~to tell you the story.~~
~~But~~ Realize: nobody ever
has been kind to you.
Wilhelm is the first person
who treats you with
friendliness, the first person
who showed concern about
your well-being. Your

gratitude, your adoration
is boundless. Secretly you
steal yourself away from
your watchful master,
seeking Wilhelm. You
want to thank him,
to give him some flowers
which you found in the
meadow. They are everything
you possess. And Wilhelm,
touched and deeply mo-
ved, takes the flowers
from you. He wants to
help you better, to free
you from the slavery

of a dreadful existence. &
He wants to bring you
back to that house which
once has been your home
that house, from which
criminals have stolen
you and made you the
slave of a tribe of
cruel gypsies. But you
cannot give him any
^{distinct} answer to his questions.
You don't know your
name, nor your age,
nor the country from

where you came. You can only
tell him how in vague dreams
sometimes there take shape in
your remembrance indistinct
pictures of your
childhood - forming themselves
ever more and more
vividly - kindling your
burning longing for your
homeland, your father-
house in so flames. —

The prelude expresses your
slow awakening to the
images of your past.
You stand with your

head bent down - raise it
it very slowly. Your eyes
seem to emerge from
deep dreaming.



This music is the first clearer
recollection of the pictures
which are buried in your
subconscious mind. Like
glittering rays of sun this
music penetrates your
mind: sunrises which
sparkled everywhere in
the sunny country where
you lived you early

childhood.

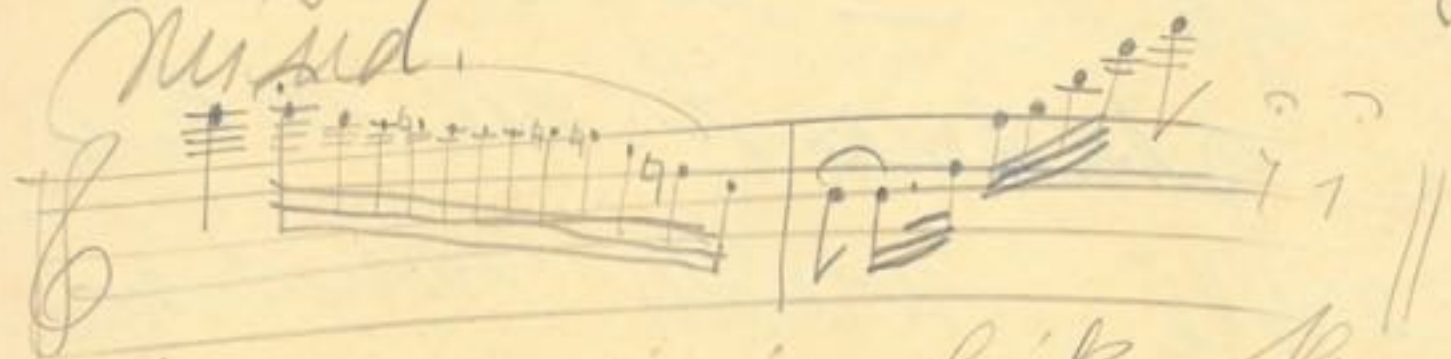
Start singing with a dreamlike expression, very piano. Follow every new thought, every new picture which arises in your memory, with increasing expression. Breathe with your eyes - smile with all your heart in delighted remembrance.

With "sous un ciel toujours bleu" the last rays of sun seem to caress the image of the lovely

country which you see (4
as a radiant image before
you. And coming back
to reality you sigh
deeply "Helas!" All your
longing, your hopelessness
is expressed in your regret
that you can never follow
him, your desire, your
savior, to the happy
shore from which fate
has taken you. You see in
Wilhelm so very much
a person who is blessed

with happiness and all the
desirable treasures of
life that you can only
imagine lie on the
way to this beautiful
country which has once
been your own homeland.
Sing with a soft longing
piano, "c'est là," and
then sing with emotion
the outbreak of your
desire. (But save the
utmost of expression
for the second verse.
Do you sing the

ending of the first verse (5
already with too much
abandon you betray
yourself of a real dynamo.
In the interlude your eyes
want to penetrate more
and more the reason
of your remembering
this.



This music is like the opening of a curtain so to speak: suddenly you see clearly before you the house. Great

excitement seized you. With quickened tempo, increased expression and vividness you painted the pictures which float through your mind. Pillars of gray marble - a glorious hall - a beautiful room in gold - and there the statues of gray white marble, which sometimes frightened you, when as a little child you passed them. They always seemed so

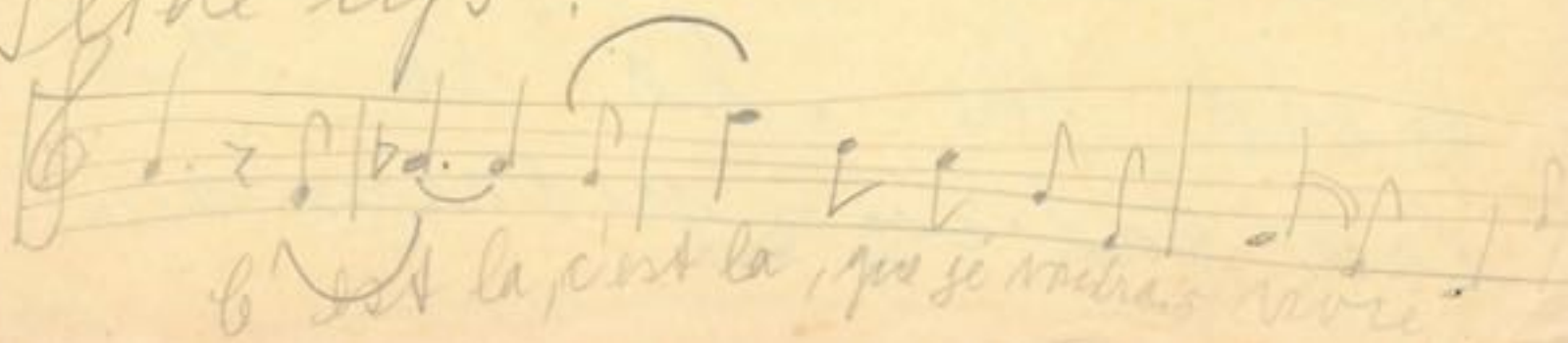
call you - and they to
call you vain and stretch
their arms at you,
consoling, pitying
you... And there in
the wonderful park
a lake... You remember
many boats, floating
over them in moon-
light. Flowers and
gayly colored lanterns
have made them glitter
and shimmer - and
under a big tree

on a wide patio were
people dancing in beau-
tiful gowns. Perhaps you
remember vaguely the lovely
Lady who was your
mother. You may see
her now she dances
dreamlike, fairlike
in a wide swaying
gown of shimmering
brocade...

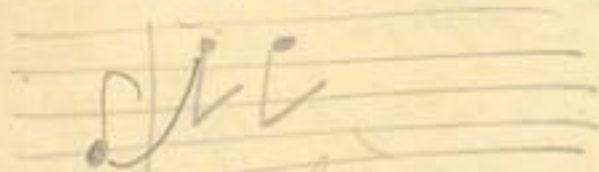
But you know: everything
is unreal, is a dream,
an image of your
fantasy.

With increased longing
and desperate desire
you sing "Hélas! Que
ne puis-je le suivre"
Singing "c'est là!" with
a longdrawn sliding up
going from a breathy
pianissimo in a
broad crescendo which
expands into a glowing
warm, floating force.

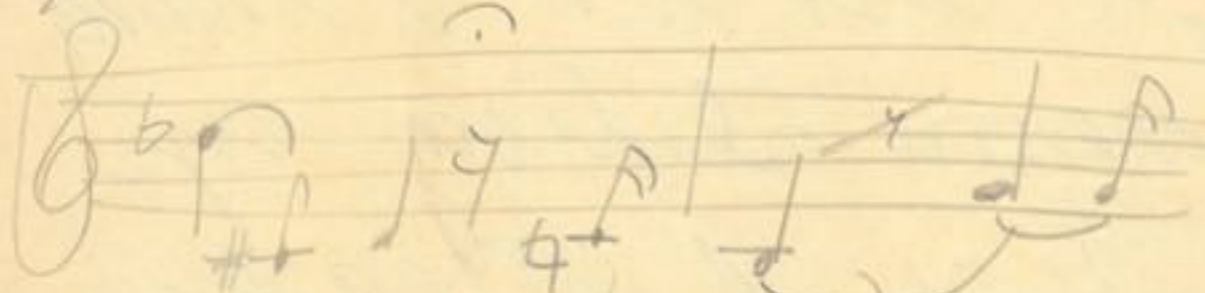
Slide up:



Do this slide very distinctly.

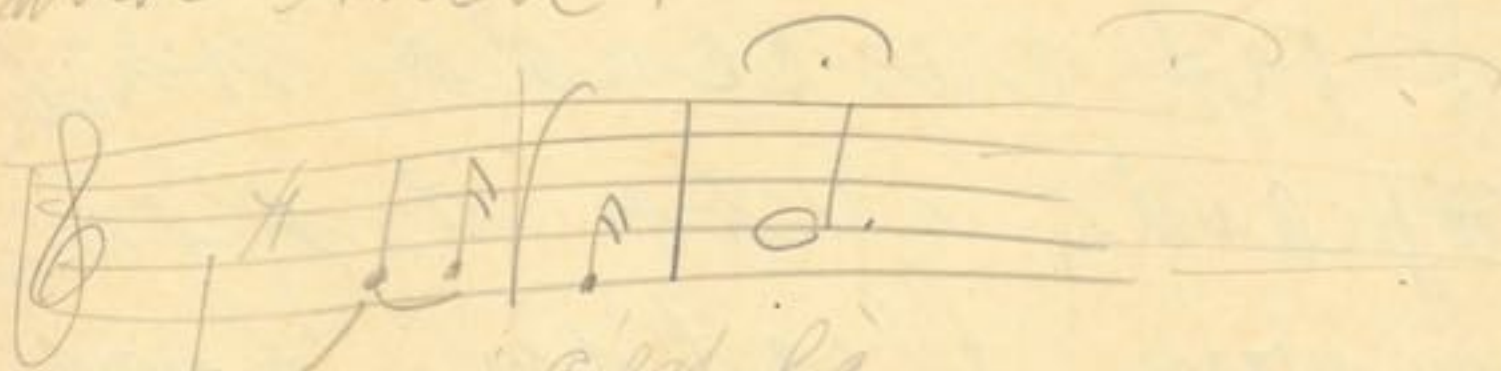


c'est là
The very last sentence *oui*
in one breath



more, c'est là = oui

and then:



oui, c'est là
breath after "oui" and
hold the "là" in a
long fading *pianissimo*.

This *Le Cid* aria interpretation idea has this “back of the page” response from LL which I transcribed. Then you’ll find LL’s first draft, followed by an edited secretary’s version. This was all done for a singer named “Anne.”

I wrote that before we talked today (July 20th) about the prelude you mean. You tell me that you don't feel at all what I try to develop in this prelude. For Heaven's sake, don't do it then! Only honesty can be really convincing in art, don't do anything which you don't feel with mind and heart! Stand now through the entire prelude in a majestic pose. Don't move like a noble statue. Only by the upswinging music raise your head slightly into the music - your eyes have an intensified look. Certainly that is all right if you do it with authority. It is better to do nothing than producing something artificially.

Transcription:

I wrote this before we talked today (July 2nd) about the prelude once more. You told me that you don't feel at all what I try to develop in this prelude. For Heaven's sake: don't do it then! Only honesty can be really convincing in art. Never do anything which you don't feel with mind and heart!

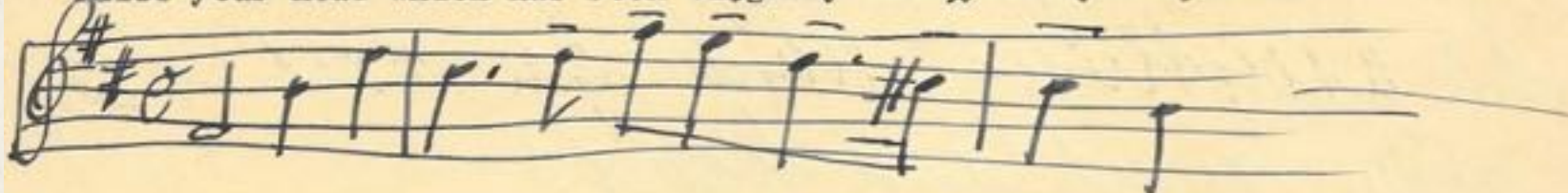
Stand now through the entire prelude in a majestic poise. [pose?] Don't move, be like a marble statue. Only by the upswEEPing music – raise your head slightly with the music – your eyes have an intensified look.

Certainly this is all right if you do it with authority. It is better to do nothing than overdoing something artificially.

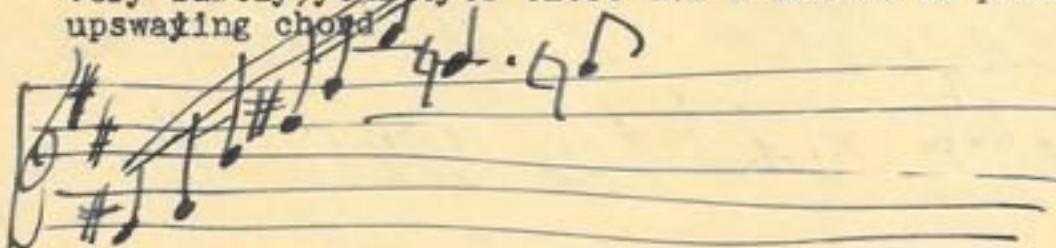


You have to fill out also on the concert platform the very long prelude. Nothing seems to me less artistic than an unmovable face, dead and uninterested eyes, a lifeless body... The music floats out from your whole inner being. Feel the prelude as you feel the aria itself. Let us look at it from a ~~more~~ ^{mere} outside way: the public sits in anticipation of your singing. The public in general does not pay so much attention to the orchestral prelude. It looks at you, observes you - and you have to force them through the power of your art to feel you sing already when the orchestra alone plays... Only so you create harmony.

Take the lovely sweep of the first chords up in your body movement: you raise your head which has been slightly bent, your eyes open wide.



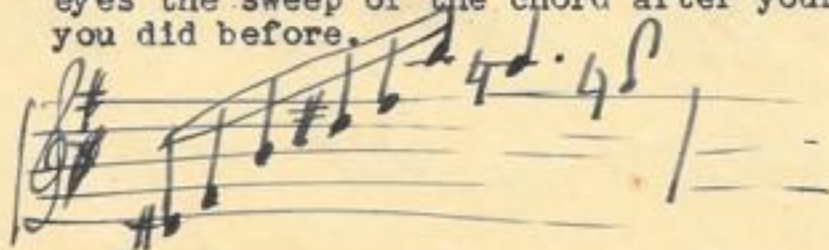
When the "dolce" starts, your inner mind seems to listen to voices of the past, something lovely, something happy. Then by the "rallentando" reality comes back to you. Your body sways backwards (everything has to be done very subtly) your eyes close for a moment in pain and despair. With the upswaying chord



your body follows again the music, your eyes open - and stay there, in a majestic poise until you start to sing.

Realize, Anne, that all these movements have to be done in a very refined way. One should never say: she is theatrical. But one also should never say: she is not quite in harmony with the music...

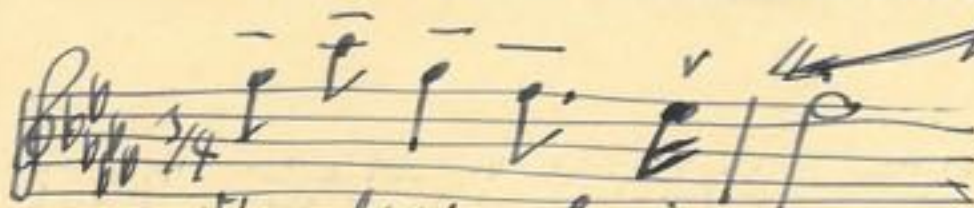
Start broadly and with importance the recitative. The voice has to be strong and quietly floating. Remember: these are the first lines which the public hears from you. Give them immediately an impression of a beautiful voice, of a poised and noble spirit. "Mais enfin je suis libre" is a little bit quickened tempo. End the recitative with authority. Take with your eyes the sweep of the chord after your recitative - in the same way as you did before.



Start the aria with much expression, but without sentimentality. The grief is very deep - a whining voice lessens the impression of real great sorrow. Plaintiveness has always a lack of strength, a lack of grandeur. Sing with feeling - but your grief should better be expressed in passion than in weeping. The little interlude

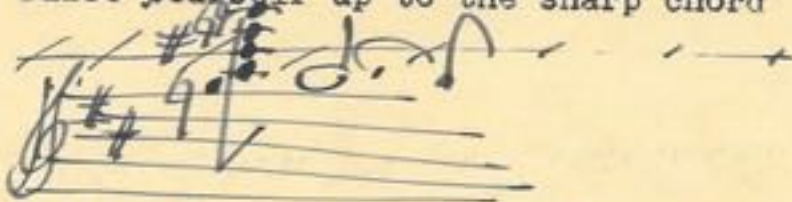
"Mais qui dom a voulu"

is the transition to the violent outbreak. Take it with your movement of body and face: your eyes open like in terror. Sing with great intensity and accellerando the next sentences. Now the remembrance comes back to you - and with it a radiance through tears. Your facial expression becomes soft and sadly smiling. Sing the crescendo by "tu ne saurais jamais" with a great sweep and much passion. (Always be careful to sing the accented notes sharply - it increases very much the energy and importance and helps you tremendously. Even a voice which has not very much power will be much more expressive and dramatic if she is guided with dramatic feeling.)



Et au chemin glorieux

Go back into a soft piano by "rallentando". Your head sinks slightly, your eyes, with sad expression, close. But immediatly with "tempo I" you raise yourself up to the sharp chord



and sing under real tears: "ah mon pere. helas." Here you really sing with tears in your voice. The remembrance of your father has now broken down your strength. You are unable to master your deep desperation. Sing the whole past part of the aria with greatest passion and end under tears.

*His I mean
with accented.*

Le Cid

Massenet

On the concert platform also, you should fill out the very long prelude. Nothing seems to me less artistic than an immovable face, dead and uninterested eyes, a lifeless body. The music floats out from your whole inner being. Feel the prelude as you feel the aria itself. Let us look at it from a mere outside viewpoint: the audience sits in anticipation of your singing. The public in general does not pay as much attention to the orchestral prelude. It looks at you and observes you. And you have to force them through the power of your art to feel you sing even when the orchestra alone is performing... Only so can you create harmony.

Take up the lovely sweep of the first chords with your body movement. You raise your head which has been slightly bent, your eyes open wide.



When the "dolce" starts, your inner mind seems to listen to voices from the past, something lovely, something happy. Then by the "rallentando", reality comes back to you. Your body sways backward (everything must be done very subtly) your eyes close for a moment in pain and despair. With the upswaying chord -



your body follows the music again, your eyes open and you stand there with a majestic poise until you start to sing.

Realize Anne, that all these movements must be done in a very refined way. You should never give anyone an opportunity to say - "she is theatrical." But also one should never be able to say: "She is not quite in harmony with the music." (I wrote this before we talked to-day - July 26th, about the prelude. You told me that you didn't feel at all what I had tried to develop in this prelude. For Heaven's Sake then don't do it! Only honesty can be really convincing in art. Never do anything which you don't feel with both mind and heart. Stand now through the entire prelude with majestic poise. Don't move, be like a noble statue. Only with the upswEEPing music raise your head slightly with the music - your eyes have an intensified look. Certainly this is all right if you do it with authority. It is better to do nothing than to overdo something artificially.)

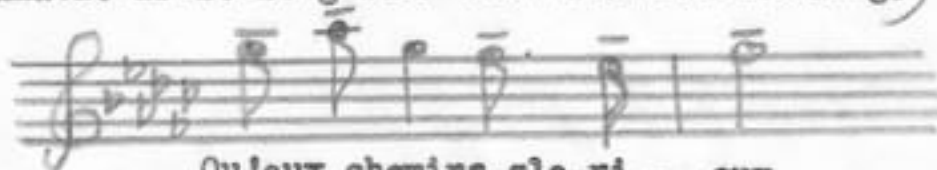
Start the recitative broadly and with importance. The voice must be strong and quietly floating. Remember: these are the first lines which the audience hears from you. Give them immediately an impression of a beautiful voice of a poised and noble spirit. The tempo is quickened a little at "Mais enfin je suis libre". End the recitative with authority. Take with your eyes the sweep of the chord after your recitative - in the same way as you did before.



Start the aria with much expression, but without sentimentality. The grief is very deep - a whining voice lessens the impression of a really great sorrow. Plaintiveness has always a lack of strength, a lack of grandeur. Sing with feeling. - but your grief should be expressed in passion rather than in weeping.

The little interlude is the transition to the violent outbreak - "Mais qui donc a voulu". Take it with your movement of both body and face. Your eyes should open as if in terror. Sing the next sentences with great intensity and accellerando.

Now the remembrance returns to you - and with it a radiance through tears. Your facial expression becomes soft and you smile sadly. Sing the oressendo at "tu ne saurais jamais" with a great sweep and much passion. (Always be careful to sing the accented notes sharply - it increases very much their energy and importance and helps you tremendously. Even a voice which has not very much power will be much more expressive and dramatic if it is guided with dramatic feeling.)



Qu'aux chemins glo-ri - eux

Go back into a soft piano at "rallentando". Your head sinks slightly, your eyes close with a sad expression. But immediately with "tempe I" you raise yourself up to the sharp chord



and sing through real tears: "ah mon père, Helas!" Here you really sing with tears in your voice.

The remembrance of your father has now broken down your strength. You are unable to master your deep desperation. Sing the whole last part of the aria with the greatest passion and end with tears.

Though LL addresses the role of Leonore in her book *My Many Lives*, the opera is here much more thoroughly discussed with interpretation and even staging suggested. This was an opera that she loved and performed to ecstatic reviews.

The noble Florestan has been caught by his political enemy Pizarro and thrown into a dark dungeon. Leonore, his wife, came in the disguise of a man to the prison in which she suspects he is, so find her husband. She works as the helper of the prisonwarden — and ~~hears~~ listens to a conversation between Pizarro and the Warden in which her husband's murder is proposed.

by the sinister Pissarro.
After he left the stage,
Leonore enters in
a rage of fury and
despair.

FIDELIO

The whole first part of the great aria (after the violently dramatic recitative at the beginning) should be sung with almost no movement - as if lost in prayer. Here she should be completely "Leonore" and not at all "Fidelio". In the second part she is overwhelmed by the immensity of her task and is so completely under the spell of her desperate struggle, that she becomes "Fidelio" from head to toe, even though she is alone. But she speaks of victory and success - and victory and success are dependant upon her own cleverness, her own skill in carrying out the plan which she has conceived: the excusable deception of these innocent people for the sake of her husband... With the fanfare of trumpets she again becomes the man who in her absorption had given place to the loving woman.

This very feminine woman must behave consciously as a man when she knows that she is under observation, but when she is alone, she is feminine and soft. For example

Fidelio (Beethoven) Act I

Florestan, a nobleman, has been captured by his political foe, Pizarro and thrown into a dungeon. Leonore, his wife, in the disguise of a man has come to the prison in which she believes her husband is suffering. She works as the helper of the prison warden and listens to a conversation between him and Pizarro who is planning her husband's murder. When Pizarro has left the stage Leonore enters in a fury of rage and despair.

This very feminine woman must consciously behave as a man when she feels herself under observation, but when she is alone, she is feminine and soft. For example the whole first part of the great aria (after the violently dramatic recitative at the beginning) should be sung with almost no movement - as if lost in prayer. Here she should be completely "Leonore" and not at all "Fidelio". In the second part she is overwhelmed by the immensity of her task and is so completely under the spell of her desperate struggle that she becomes "Fidelio" from head to toe, even though she is alone. But she speaks of victory and success - and victory and success are dependent upon her own cleverness, her own skill in carrying out the plan which she has conceived: the ^{deception} excusable of these innocent people for the sake of her husband... With the fanfare of trumpets she becomes again the man who in her absorption had given place to the loving woman.

FIDELIO

Before studying an opera role, one should always try to understand the story which underlies it. You must have actually lived your part, before the action, which you are to bring to life, commences. This is the only way to be sure of the kind of personality which you are to represent. You certainly know of the terrible tragedy which Leonore has experienced. But now you must make it clear to yourself. Is the fact that Leonore appears in the disguise of a man and was accepted as a man, proof that she has always been strong masculine, clever in concealing her thoughts? In reality it was terribly difficult for her to make herself convincing as a man. My opinion is that Leonore was an essentially feminine person. A glimpse of her real self has to be revealed in the last scene of the opera, when she can be what she really is, - a loving and devoted wife. But play up to this revealing end. Show in your whole acting that only the deepest love and the utmost devotion has given you the strength to appear convincing in your disguise and to live through the dreadfully distressing fact that a girl falls in love with you, the MAN...

Before the curtain rises for your entrance you have gone on an errand which was very painful for you. You have had to bring ^{back} the chains for the prisoners. The thought that perhaps these very chains would be placed upon your husband, - that they would prove so strong, that there would be no way of ^{ever} freeing him from them, has tortured you terribly. ^{But} You, whose only thought is to free him and many others who ~~though~~ innocent are also suffering in this horrible prison, ^{are} the very one to bring the chains, which will make it impossible for him and them ~~ever~~ to escape!

Your body also has suffered, - you have not the strength of a man, but you must seem to SHOW the strength of a man. You want always to prove again and again that you are what you seem to be. A man would perhaps say - this work is too heavy for me, but you don't dare to say it for fear that your disguise may be revealed.

Then, always when you have been away from Rocco's house for a while, you are afraid that something may have happened. Perhaps your husband whom you believe to be in the prison, is dead. Or perhaps someone has discovered your secret, in which case there would be no hope of your freeing him.

Now when you appear upon the stage you know exactly how you must behave; almost broken down under the heavy load of chains and the terrible fatigue from the long trip from the blacksmith to the house of Rocco, but afraid that something may have happened. ^{Enter} the door, therefore, bent deeply under the load, breathing heavily, giving the picture of utter exhaustion. For a moment you gaze anxiously about the room, but the faces of Rocco and Marcelina are quiet and kind. You breathe more easily, your body, slightly ~~sinking~~ sinks for a second against the doorframe in exhaustion. →

Scene I
Act I

Rocco and Marcelline seem to be distressed by Fidelio's apparent exhaustion. Both help to free him from his heavy burden. Fidelio greets Marcelline with a slight gesture of affection, - immediately turning to Rocco.

~~Fidelio~~

~~X~~
~~Rocco~~

~~X~~
~~Marcelline~~

(Your whole behavior with the girl must always be that of embarrassment. You really like the girl and suffer because of the tragic misunderstanding, which due to your disguise, made her fall in love with you. You also like and respect Rocco and feel terribly that you are forced to betray both of them.)

Rocco takes the bag with the important letters which you have brought him. Under his kind praise of your work you try to smile, avoiding his eyes when he says: "I like you better from day to day."

React immediately when he says "but your reward." At the word reward - (Lohn) you listen intensely, then turn to him and say rather quickly: "But don't think that I do what I do for reward.." That Rocco could think of you in this way has hurt you. But he stops you with a friendly gesture, saying: - "Don't you know that I can see into your heart?" This word shocks you deeply. Again you feel the painful realization of the affection and trust of these simple people. An affection which you, yourself, feel for them, but which you are forced to betray, through the necessity of reaching your great goal- the freedom of your beloved husband. "

The prelude to the quartet mirrors the thoughts of the three people, who (before Jaquino enters) are on the stage. I suppose that the stage director in Buenos Aires will arrange that you stand absolutely quietly. (In Vienna I went over toward the right side, very slowly, but this is rather unusual and very much against the tradition. By the way I liked this very much but it is very difficult to do without breaking the spell of the music. Let us suppose you are perfectly still.) Only your face, your eyes can say what you feel. It is well to realize here, what the two others are thinking. BE ALWAYS A PART OF THE WHOLE - This will make you master of the stage. Rocco thinks, looking from one to the other: - "I think I know their feelings, I am sure that they love each other. My blessing is with them. My daughter will be happy with this good and honest boy, whom I love even though I know nothing of his past, his parents, and even though his behavior seems always a little strange."

Marcelline thinks what she is singing - "oh how strangely happy I am! My heart beats, - he loves me, I know, he loves me and I shall be so happy with him.."

And you think: - "This good friendly man believes in me and trusts me. He thinks that he can see to the bottom of my heart. But what would he see there? He would find betrayal and misrepresentation.. Oh may he not lose his trust! If he should discover who I am and why I am here, I should be lost! Lost would be the last opportunity to free my husband. I must be careful. Oh God help me to reach my goal!" The soft crescendo in the prelude is to be taken with your whole body. You sigh. Your head bends down with the accent in the crescendo. When Marcelline starts to sing you turn your head toward her slight is Your eyes show how you are listening to her. Certainly you should not understand-so to speak - what she sings. Her singing is her thought. But you

know her thoughts, you read them in her transfigured face, in her spellbound rapture. You turn your head away from her with distress and fear. The first words are almost whispered, as if you are overcome by emotion. Start to sing a lovely melodic line with "Sie liebt mich, es ist Klar".

The whole quartet is music - no acting. Your eyes must act. Reflect - delicately - accents in the music, with your body, your facial expression. The last "o namenlose Pein" with its strong fortissimo is like a heavy sigh. You turn your head with despair toward your right shoulder. Rocco's call "Fidelio" awakens you to reality. (It startles you - everything is frightening to you because you are never sure whether you haven't done something which will betray your disguise.) When Rocco says "I don't know who you are or from where you come", you react with your eyes, thinking - "oh what is he going to say? Does he suddenly distrust me?" When he says "I want you as my son-in-law", you play up to him and to Marcelline with a gesture of delighted surprise, turning immediately to the right so that the public can see from your expression how utterly distressed you are. You listen intently to him. React to the word "Der Gouverneur". (This is very important for you. The Governor is the enemy who put your husband in prison.) When Rocco says - "the day after his departure" you say to yourself, (turned toward the right facing the audience) as if whispering: "What new embarrassment". You say this without waiting for a cue, during the dialogue between Rocco and Marcelline.

Rocco asks now "My children, you do love each other, don't you?" and you turn to them smiling, agreeing. Do this with a gesture as if you stand at attention. Never be sentimental. You have a dangerous tendency, Rose, to give the impression of sentimentality. It is difficult for you, to give the impression of distress, worry, and playing up to them, convincingly. Always remember that Fidelio has rehearsed behaving like a man. You have practiced walking like a man. You are always carefully watching yourself that nothing in your behavior may seem feminine. (No gracefully rounded gesture with your elbow, please !!!!!)

(This expression is exaggerated but I want it to convey the idea of being masculine.)

Now Marcelline looks at you - full of love and delight. You are never able to look into her eyes for more than a fleeting moment and here too you only answer her gaze fleetingly, - turning your eyes away. When Rocco says: "but one also needs money for a marriage" you answer with an almost absentminded smile. During his aria you half listen to him and the flow of your thoughts may be something like this: - "Oh these little small minded people, - what do they know of love? Rocco thinks of happiness in marriage as comfortable living - nothing else. (Walk to the window leaning against it. The light should fall on your face. Be sure that it does!) "But oh! When shall I know happiness again? Where is there light for me? Will the time ever come again when I may live once more with my husband in peaceful bliss?" (Turning back to the stage - you are at the right side - listen again to Rocco for a moment, half smiling, then think -) "What shall I do, I have been here for weeks but I have accomplished nothing. I don't even know if my husband is really here, if he is alive or murdered. My situation is worse than ever, being now the fiancé of that poor girl. Oh how impatience (walk up and down, slowly, discretely) tortures me!" (listen again to Rocco) - "And he talks about money and comfortable housekeeping!! Worlds lie between these people and me." Now Rocco's aria has ended. You have walked so that you are now at the center of the stage - not too near the footlights. You stand there, head slightly bowed. You raise your head with a proud gesture and say with a friendly tone: - "It may be easy for you to have this idea, but I believe that the union of two loving hearts is the source of true happiness." Now you forget yourself for a moment;

then you burst out with "oh this happiness should be the greatest blessing of earth!" (Consider: - You have always played up to Marcelline's falling in love with you, - in spite of your inner embarrassment, - but certainly both Marcelline and Rocco know you only as a rather cool and unemotional boy. Here is a moment in which you may have betrayed the role, which up to now you have played so successfully. You realize this immediately and pull yourself together, changing back again into your role - the boy.)

You see that Rocco is in a very kind and good mood. Being forced to take advantage of everything which may help you, you immediately make use of this good mood and try to convince Rocco that it would be to his advantage to take you to the secret prison. (There you hope to find your husband.)

Turn with a boyish gesture to Rocco and say with great charm: - "but there is something else which would be no less precious to me."

(Rose, you must always remember that you have been a very beautiful, noble, woman - Florestan's wife. You have held a high social position, - men have adored you. You have always only had to lift a finger to have everyone rush to do your bidding. So you are confident of your charm. You have to take advantage of everything which may help you in your great task. So at this moment, you also take advantage of your charm.)

Continue: "but I see with regret that I shall never be able to get that which I most long for."

Rocco asks with astonishment "What is it?"
hesitantly: - "Your trust in me."

You answer a little

(You know that your reproach is without reason. He gave you the greatest proof of his trust in accepting you as his son-in-law.)

Rocco with a gesture of surprise and ^{amoyance} ~~pain~~, walks to the other side of the stage (to the right). You follow him and say rather quickly and persuasively: - "forgive me for this reproach. But I see you often return from the deep dungeons of the prison, so exhausted.,, Why don't you let me come with you?"

Rocco sits down. He refuses hesitantly. "But you know that I have the strictest orders, never to take anyone, no matter who it may be, with me to the political prisoners." When he says "anyone" you make a gesture, as if saying - "but me?" You trust me, don't you?" Therefore he answers with "whoever it may be". Discouraged you turn away. Now Marcelline comes to your aid. She says that in her opinion he is too old to do this heavy work. Immediately you turn back and join her in a repetition of your plea. Talk to him in an almost caressing voice, convincingly, anxiously. You are almost trembling in your urgency. You wait for his answer, trembling from head to toe. When he finally agrees, you turn your head with a gesture of suppressed delight. You think: - "Now I am a step nearer to my goal! This is the first bit of progress! Perhaps I shall find my husband now, perhaps soon I shall see him!"

Rocco's remark, that there is one prison cell to which he cannot take you, awakens you immediately from your happiness. You turn toward him, facing him with the greatest anxiety. Marcelline asks if he means the prisoner, about whom he has sometimes talked, in the past. He answers: - "Yes, it is he." You, suspecting that this may be Florestan, try to learn how long he has been there.

(Rose, this whole scene is loaded with suspense, and tremendous suppressed excitement and tragic fear. It is difficult to be convincing here. One has to see your trembling anxiety, but you have to play very subtly because otherwise Rocco and Marcelline would be amazed at your exaggerated behavior and the whole scene would become unnatural. It is very difficult and certainly never quite to be accomplished.)

With an almost choking voice, you ask him: - "Was it a long time ago that he came here?" Rocco answers "Two years". Now you are almost sure that it is Florestan! It was just two years ago that he was taken away to prison. All the clues which you have secretly followed, have led you to this prison, but you have had no real proof that your husband was here. But the fact that this prisoner, suffering in the dungeon, has been here two years, seems to give you the confirmation that it is Florestan.

You cannot suppress an outcry - "Two years, you say?" But ^{you} realize immediately how terribly dangerous this outcry has been. It may have awakened Rocco and Marcelline's suspicion. You turn to them and see blank astonishment in their faces. Change quickly into the boy whom they are accustomed to see - and say with an expression of convincing certainty and with a touch of bitterness in it - "He must be a dreadful criminal!"

(Rose: you have learned to give this kind of answer to Rocco. Rocco is a kind man at heart but he is the warden of prisoners and he has learned through a lifetime of experience to be outwardly rather hard. You have tried to copy this attitude, anxiously seeking to be as masculine as possible.)

Rocco says - "or he must have had great enemies." You react to this remark, - turn away with a painful expression, thinking - "oh yes, his enemies have been powerful." But Rocco says something terrible now - "But his torture won't be long now, he can't last much longer." Your "OH, my God!" is a suffocated sigh. You listen now to Rocco with your body and head turned away from him. You want to conceal your despair. But emotion overwhelms you. You can't control yourself any longer. Tears stream over your averted face, you bury it in your hands, fighting desperately but vainly for strength. Marcelline who has watched you with increasing distress, says now in a trembling voice:- "oh father, don't take Fidelio with you. He is too softhearted, he would suffer too much, seeing all this misery." This awakens you, this brings back your strength, your will power. So near your goal, so near the possibility of finding your husband you can't destroy everything through your weakness.. You turn around facing them. For the first time, you seem like a burning flame. "Why not? I have power and strength!" Say this in a ringing voice. It is like a fanfare of victory, of glowing conviction. Here be Leonore, - the loving wife, the heroic woman, be yourself without forgetting to be at the same time - the man. You have the center of the stage, you stand erect, your head raised proudly and enthusiastically. Your eyes glow with your inner fire. You are a woman who does not fear heaven or earth.

Act I, Scene I (Trio)

During the first chords of the music, you remain in your position of ecstasy. Turn toward Rocco when he sings "hab' immer Mut" - thinking: "Oh yes, - I have courage!" When he sings "dann wird's dir auch gelingen" - you turn again toward the audience. Your face expresses the feeling: - "I know, I will succeed!" At "Gegenwart bei fürchterlichen Dingen" you react with the feeling - "oh I know how dreadful it will be to see my husband suffering in the depths of the dungeon." But the soaring music reflects your elation and you sing with dramatic energy and power - "Ich habe Mut."

Sing "Mit kaltem Blut will ich hinab mich wagen" with accentuation and a kind of ferocity. Your gesture should express the idea of going down into the horrors of this prison. Then change immediately to an expression of heroic happiness: - "Für hohen Lohn kann Liebe schon auch hohe Leiden tragen." At first you don't listen at all to Marcelline's words, but you become conscious of them when she says that your heart will suffer. Oh you know that, - your face must show that you fully realize the terrible ordeal which lies ahead of you. Turn with an embarrassed gesture toward Marcelline - only for a second, - as she sings "Dann kehrt zurück der Liebe Glück" and then you realize that her words have great significance for your own fate. Your face lights up with hope and courageous conviction. Don't pay attention to Rocco and Marcelline now, sing (from the center of the stage) for yourself - "Ich hab' auf Gott und Recht Vertrauen." How can there be any doubt that you will succeed? "I trust in God, - in my ability to do the right thing. My husband is innocent, it is a good deed, to free him. God will be with me."

When Marcelline sings that you should look into her eyes, you give her only a fleeting glance, returning immediately to your expression of exaltation. "Ja, - Ja" is with a step forward (with the sforzato).

From the moment when Rocco walks meditatively to the other side of the stage, your eyes follow him anxiously. The word "der Gouverneur" makes you listen even more excitedly. At "erlauben" you already understand what Rocco wants to say: - "I shall take you with me;" - so respond quickly and follow Rocco with a pleading gesture: - "Please take me now, don't let me wait." Then don't listen to them any more, turn toward the right, walking slowly for a few steps and sing with great expression - "Wie lang' bin ich des Kymmers Beute." Your face is full of pain, but change immediately when you sing "du, Hoffnung..." Hope smiles at you. Your face should mirror this ray of hope, of sunshine. After the long "Labung" reflect the soft longing of the orchestral music in your gesture. Here you may indulge in a beautiful, gracefully feminine gesture...

React immediately to Rocco's "habt immer Mut!" Go toward him and sing to him with an affectionate gesture - "Ihr seid so gut, ihr macht mir Mut." Then sing "gestillt wird bald mein Sehnen" again only for yourself. It makes you shudder to think that you have agreed to marry Marcelline. She will weep bitter tears when you leave her and you are perhaps unable to explain why you were forced to deceive her so terribly. To be the cause of her tears distresses you very much. There is a real outbreak - "ich gab die Hand zum süßen Band" - sing it with great emotion and desperation.

At the end of the trio Rocco takes your hand and Marcelline's hand, putting them together and blessing your union. Your head is averted as much as is possible without destroying the sense of the scene. (Not too conspicuously because Rocco and Marcelline would suspect you!) The audience must have the impression of your deep distress at being the victim of such a terribly tragic and embarrassing a situation. As the curtain falls you lay your arm about Marcelline's shoulders, following Rocco who starts to leave the room.

Act I, Scene II

You listen to the duet between Pizarro and Rocco. In Vienna and Salzburg we had a marvellous stage setting: A gallery which enclosed the prison court, so that I could walk around from one side to the other and listen from above. In any case it must be arranged so that you listen giving the impression that you only understand a little of what they are saying. You hear something and guess the rest. You only know with certainty that it is a crime which is being planned, a crime from which Rocco seems to shrink but which Pizarro is sure will go through.

With the first chords of the prelude to the aria you rush onto the stage with vigorous steps - seeming to follow Pizarro. On reaching the center of the stage you stand still. Your gesture suggests that you are turning toward Pizarro - but be careful that you are singing directly toward the audience, so that nothing of the tone value is lost. The beginning of the aria must sound formidable. After "Was hast du vor in wildem Grimme?" you relax your gesture - an expression of almost religious awe comes over your face at "des Mitleids Ruf, der Menschheit Stimme". (The whole Recitative must have grandeur, great style and dramatic power.)

With - "Rührt nichts mehr deinen Tigersinn?" your gesture and expression return to glowing fury.

At "Doch toben auch wie Meer˛ogen" - your right arm should suggest the uproar of a vast ocean, it should be outstretched with the palm down and swung in a half circle. Your hand must be full of energy and dramatic tenseness.

With "Dir in der Seele Zorn und Wut", raise your arm with a strong threatening clenched fist, then with the soft chords preceding "so leuchtet" open your hand with an upward pleading gesture toward the dark and threatening sky, where now a rainbow of hope seems to smile down upon you. Your face must show your ecstatic and religious conviction of your final victory. Your heroic bearing changes into one of warmth and feminine softness. Like a prayer, you sing - "Komm' Hoffnung." Be very simple now, avoid gestures if you don't feel an inner urge for them. The first part of the aria in the grandeur of its simplicity, with its perfect and beautiful flow, certainly does not need the support of gestures. The musical line conveys in itself the utmost of expressiveness. You might stretch your arms (palms upwards) in a beautiful pleading gesture, toward the sky, as you sing the terribly difficult "erreichen" with its radiant climax. After this gentle outbreak, your head should turn slightly toward the left side with a faint suggestion of doubt and fear. (You do this to bring more emphasis to the next very elated phrase. - Always prepare for climaxes!) The following "erhell' ihr Ziel" will then stand out more vividly. Your courage returns, your doubts vanish. The last word in the first part of the aria - "erreichen" - should be sung very broadly and it should be accentuated. It is the transition to the fierce dramatic uplift of the second part. The prelude to this part is like a fanfare of victory. Your whole bearing now changes completely. You have been soft and very feminine in both your singing and acting, you have been quite yourself, quite Leonore. Now you change into Fidelio - the man. Sing - "Ich folg' dem inner'n Triebe" dramatically, full of fire, as if you are inspired and confident of your victory.

At "O du, für den ich alles trug" your hands are folded for a moment as if in prayer. With "Komm' ich zur Stelle dringen" - they open again, and again become tense.

At "Wo Bosheit dich in Fesseln schlug" - your right arm (with the hand very energetic!!!) seems to point backwards to the terrible prison where your husband may be suffering. Bring back your arm immediately so that at "Komm' ich zur Stelle dringen" (the last time) you may stretch both arms upwards in a wide and violently pleading gesture. You stand erect like a burning flame.

like the personification of revenge. Immediately reflect in your gesture the fanfarelike quality of the music of the orchestra. Walk with masculine and energetic steps halfway across the stage so that you sing the end of the aria from the left side. Now retain a fierce and strong dramatic gesture, (certainly without seeming to "freeze" in this position !!!) and hold back your strength for the difficult finale of the aria. If you overdo your gestures you may tire yourself and shorten your breath. Save strength and power for your voice. You may have sung the whole aria like an angel - but if the last high note isn't very good, your success will only be moderate. You may sing the whole aria very mediocrally (don't do that, Rose !!!) and then sing a beautifully effective high note and the audience will go wild.. That is the sad truth. So - save your strength, quiet down, concentrate on singing at the very end !

Good luck ! I know how difficult this aria is, but I am sure you will do it beautifully !

Run from the stage with the postlude.



Act I, Scene II (cont.)

You come from the left with Rocco. Don't pay any attention to the conversation between Rocco, Marcelline and Jaquino. Interrupt Rocco, who says - "I have different and better plans" - almost impatiently, but be charming and warm when you ask him to give the poor prisoners an hour of daylight and sunshine out in the garden. When Marcelline reminds her father that Pizarro has asked a favor of him and that therefore such a kind exception should be overlooked, you listen with bitter suspicion. - ("What kind of a favor? Can it be a murder?") Rocco agrees - and you receive the keys. You open one side of the prison cells, Jaquino, the others.

(Fidelio does not really expect to find her husband among these prisoners. She has probably already seen them several times, bringing them meals and cleaning their cells, etc. But she does not want to neglect any opportunity. Perhaps there might be a secret cell which she had not been able to see before. Perhaps he might be there, - among the others.)

You must act now very discretely, Rose. You must look about anxiously searching their faces, but you have to do this very inconspicuously. In this scene the chorus is the main thing, the center of attention. Don't take the attention of the audience away from them, by being too vivid, too important. Walk slowly from one side to the other, then turn with a gesture of resignation toward the back of the stage, leaning there against a wall, a pillar or whatever may be there. When the young prisoner sings about new hope and freedom, you listen to him, your own hope intensified by his conviction of freedom. You react with a gesture of happiness and hope. The chorus also shows this reaction and you also react with them, when the old prisoner warns the others to be careful because they are being watched, from every side. You stand until the end of the chorus, erect and motionless, in the right foreground, leaning against the wall. (you have come forward during the young prisoner's singing.) You stand there like a monument, as if you are the personification of the suppressed agony of the prisoners. You are like their soul, standing, caught between the dark prison walls - your face uplifted to the limitless sky and the radiant sun...

The first chords of the music which is Rocco's entrance, awaken you from your trance. You run ^{towards him} anxiously, with manly steps, asking how his intervention with Pizarro went. Walk (full of life) with Rocco more toward the front of the stage and react immediately to "your marriage" with a turn of the head indicating disgust, then your face lights up quickly with delight at "and your help" even before he has a chance to say "is granted - and I take you with me to-day!"

Your "Noch heute!" is a great outbreak - almost interrupt Rocco, in your impatience, asking him where he will take you. When Rocco says that you will go to the poor man down in the deepest dungeon, you, hoping against hope, ask him if he is going to free him. React when he says - "wir müssen ihn - doch wie? - befreien." At this moment you misunderstand him and think that he means that you will both free him and help him out of this prison. This one burning flame of hope vanishes when he says that you have to bury his body. (Freeing him means to Rocco: - seeing him dead, - for in his opinion there is no hope for Florestan and only death can free him from his tortures...) Your question - "so ist er tot?" is a horrified outbreak - and when Rocco says "not yet" you seem to think that he wants to kill Florestan upon Pizarro's order. You are in a rage and your question - "are you willing to kill him?" is a terrifying threat. Your hand involuntarily grips the little leather bag which hangs from your belt - where you have hidden a gun. Rocco answers that he certainly never would commit a murder but that the Governor himself will do so and you and Rocco have only to dig his grave. When Rocco says "der Gouverneur" you react violently. By this time you have not the slightest doubt that this prisoner is really your husband. The

R Governor was the powerful political enemy who imprisoned Florestan. Now he is going to be his murderer.. The five heavy chords after "geht selbst hinab" are your own violent steps. Cross the stage, your right hand on your bag with the gun, your eyes blazing, your face showing the glowing rage within your heart. ~~Now~~ Now the devastating thought of being the one to dig your own beloved husband's grave makes you shudder through every atom of your being. Through tears you sing, as if to yourself, your face turned away from Rocco - "Oh what a dreadful fate, to dig the grave of my own husband" - What horror can compare with this?" Tears choke your voice.

Rocco's words only half awaken you from your overpowering desperation. You start your repeated assertion that you will follow him wherever he goes, as if you were half fainting, - then with the crescendo pull yourself together. When he talks about the old well where it will be easy to dig the grave, turn away with a visible shudder. Rocco, watching you, asks if you are afraid. Answer him with a choking voice, summoning all your strength but nevertheless fighting in vain against your tears. After saying "ich bin es nur noch nicht gewohnt" you turn away. In your deep pain you almost forget Rocco's presence, and you allow your tears to stream over your face. The two - "o welch' ein Schmerz" are sung absolutely through tears. Rocco watching you anxiously, wants to spare you the terrible experience and refuses to take you with him. The horrible fear, that your own weakness may have destroyed your first opportunity to see your husband, brings you back to your senses. With violence your grip his arm and swear that you must go. Sing with heroic expression and bearing, the short (and alas + difficult !!!!) duet with Rocco. Don't make too many movements. Just hold a determined and heroic position.

You and Rocco start to go, but you are interrupted by Marcelline and Jaquino, who tell you that the Governor is coming, in raging fury because the poor prisoners have been allowed a few moments of freedom, at least so called "freedom" amidst the prison walls.

When Pizarro enters you start to walk toward him. Your hand is on your gun, you are fighting against your surging fury. You halt your violent strides and stand at attention not too near him. You listen to the conversation between Rocco and Pizarro filled with bitterness. When Rocco finds a reasonable excuse for the liberal treatment of the prisoners, in the fact that to-day is the birthday of the king, your lips curl in a smile full of scorn and detestation, realizing that Pizarro is forced to yield in this argument. When Rocco talks secretly with Pizarro, you try to get near enough to overhear the conversation. All you can get is Pizarro's reply - "hurry to dig his grave."

Trembling you obey when the sign is given to bring the prisoners back.

When you return with them to the stage, support an old, weak prisoner who stumbles, then go to the right side of the stage for the ensemble. At this point where you are, depends upon the stage director but at the end of the Ensemble you should be in the center, so that you can whisper the last "den Frevler" (the criminal) very near the footlights, your head bowed, your fists clenched in raging desperation.

Then you straighten your body with a gesture of decision and taking the lantern and the shovel you slowly follow Rocco to the prison entrance. Passing the dark and silent figure of Pizarro who has now the center of the stage, your feet seem to stop - but you walk on with the sombre and threatening conviction that you will meet Pizarro down in the dungeon - face to face with him - the torturer of your husband, but soon to be the victim of your courageous act.

Act II (Prison)

The whole melodrama is spoken in a half tone. Your diction must be very distinct in order that each word may carry through the large theatre.

The two first sentences - "How cold it is here in the deep dungeon" and "I was afraid we would never find the right entrance," - are said more to cover up your trembling excitement than to really express anything. Look about ^{all you} anxiously seeking your husband. It is very dark, only a little oil lamp gives some miserable light. Your eyes try to penetrate the prison cell, but Florestan lies motionless like a bundle on the side of his hard bench. Rocco, being familiar with the situation discovers him first. "He is there". You are shocked at seeing him so absolutely without a sign of life and say, a full of fear, - "He is so motionless". Try to go nearer to him. His ^{head is} buried in his arms, you cannot see his face. Rocco says hopefully - "perhaps he is dead". (How relieved he would be if this were the case! To be forced by Pizarro to see him die under his murdering hand, would make Rocco an accomplice in the murder. He would suffer throughout the rest of his life under this knowledge of this hideous deed. But Florestan is a lost man. If he were to die a natural death it would mean not only freedom for him but an inner freedom for Rocco as well.) You answer in a trembling whisper - "You think so?" But Florestan moves - and when Rocco says - "no, he is sleeping", you breathe again.

Rocco crosses to the right side to prepare for the digging. You stay near Florestan trying to get a glimpse of his face. Say with desperate impatience - "it is impossible to distinguish his features -" and come with the word "God" on the chord:



"God help me if it be he!" The two bars "andante con moto" use to walk back and forth around Florestan, watching him. But you cannot tell whether it really is Florestan. Rocco in the meantime is busy with preparations. He calls for you to give him the axe. Coming to him you see the deep terrible well which is to be the grave of your husband. Involuntarily you shrink back violently, staring full of horror at the threatening sight. Rocco asks you if you are afraid. You pull yourself together and say with a shudder - "oh no, it is only so cold." You send a last glance toward the motionless Florestan and hesitantly descend into the well. During the duet you give the impression of digging and of helping Rocco with the heavy stone. After the stone has been pushed away you sink for a moment exhausted on the wall of the well, drying your forehead. You search Florestan's face, anxiously, but in vain. Forgetting Rocco for an instant you go nearer to Florestan, singing to him in a suppressed but dramatically expressive voice - "Whoever you are, I shall free you." In this moment you would really risk your life for this poor man, whoever he may be. Your feeling for justice, for freedom and for innocence is too great - you are convinced that it is your mission to free this man.

Rocco calls you. You hasten to him and start again to work. At the end of the duet you stand leaning with your hands upon the shovel. The work is almost done. Your gaze turns to Florestan - you see him move, - and say excitedly in a suppressed voice, to Rocco - "he has moved." When Rocco turns to Florestan you sigh, - ~~like a whisper~~ like a whisper - "What I feel is indescribable!" You watch Florestan desperately but Rocco is between you and Florestan. You cannot see him. When you hear the sound of his voice, you seem to recognize it as that of your husband, - but you are not sure. The suffering in this gravelike dungeon, - hunger and thirst have altered both your husband's appearance and his voice. Rocco moves and you see for the first time your husband's face. With the suppressed cry - "It is he!" you lose consciousness for a moment, falling forward.

You pull yourself together immediately, following the conversation. React violently to everything which Florestan says. When he speaks of you, his wife, get up (you have been upon your knees) step out of the well saying, through tears, "oh he does not know that it is she who digs his grave."

When Florestan begs for water you throw yourself in desperation against the wall, sobbing - "I cannot bear it any longer."

Rocco moved by Florestan's misery calls you to bring the wine. You say to Rocco in a choking voice - "there it is" (meaning the wine) then turn away, saying to yourself, through tears, "there he is."

As you approach Florestan, he sees your face for a second. The resemblance to his wife strikes him unconsciously and he asks excitedly - "who is this?" Rocco tells him it is his son-in-law. You overcome with emotion sink down on the stone wall by the well, covering your eyes with your hands. Rocco, also deeply moved, comes nearer to you, asking if you are shocked too much. With streaming tears you look up at him, saying - "But who would not be moved? You yourself, Master Rocco - " When he answers - "Yes, this man has a strange voice," you throw back your head with a gesture of exaltation and say trembling: "Yes." (This "yes" is like a long drawn sigh) it penetrates to the depths of one's heart."

TRIO

When Florestan starts to sing, thanking Rocco for the little gulp of water, you listen, deeply moved to the roots of your being, to the sound of his voice. Get up slowly, almost swaying, when Rocco speaks to you and sing as if to yourself through tears of emotion - "How wildly throbs my heart! It throbs in joy and deepest pain!" Give a sforzato to "wagt" (throbs).



Rocco, after the end of the short trio, starts to go down again into the well. You, looking at Florestan, take a piece of bread from your leather bag. Holding Rocco back by the arm, you ask him urgently to give this bread to Florestan. During the interlude you look always at Florestan. Your attention is divided between him and Rocco. Rocco refuses and again starts to descend into the well. You hold him back with desperation. Your repeated plea seems to touch Rocco and you say desperately: "He will soon be dead"... Rocco is at last convinced that the poor doomed man might be granted this small favor. When he gives you this permission, you give a sigh of relief and walk toward Florestan. Painfully taking care that he never sees your face, lest he recognize you and so ruin your plan. You suppress your desire to look into his eyes and give him the bread, with your face turned aside. Your voice is choked with emotion. You are scarcely able to talk. Florestan presses your hand gratefully. As he releases it, you press it for a second against your lips, kissing the palm of your hand where his hand has touched it. Sing in a beautiful and quietly floating line - "The heavens may grant your freedom - that is my reward."

Standing in the center of the stage, turning to Rocco, you say - "you showed kindness to this poor man." Then you say to yourself - "This is more than I can bear," - repeating this phrase with an accelerando



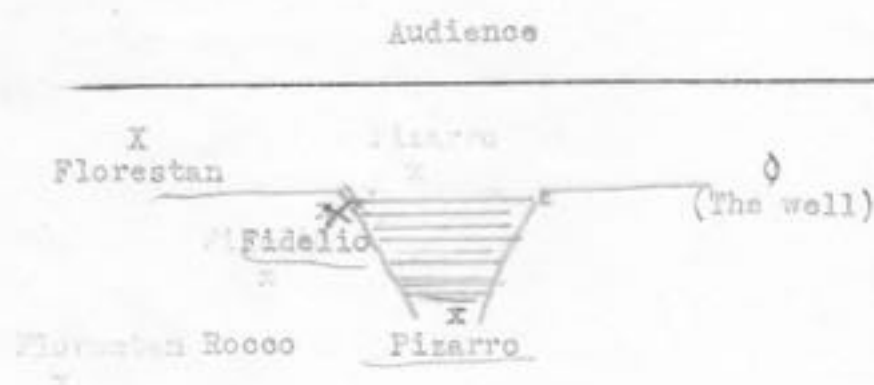
You walk with two vigorous steps to the right side -



After the trio Rocco says - "everything is prepared now. I shall give the sign."

You take a violent breath - whispering with a choking voice - "Oh God grant me courage and strength !" When Rocco gives the apparently appointed signal with his whistle, Florestan is startled. You immediately run over to him, always averting your face. Answer his question as to what this signal means with great haste: "Be quiet and whatever you see or hear, never forget that Providence reigns !" Repeat it with religious conviction, ecstatically moved "Yes, Providence reigns!"

Pizarro appears at the top of the stairs. You leave Florestan, pressing yourself closely to the wall at the left -



Pizarro, as he passes you, looking into your eyes, for a second, is shocked and asks in a harsh tone "Who is this ?" He orders Rocco to put you out. Rocco, trembling with fear, orders you to go away. He is deeply shocked as he realizes that the ordeal of witnessing the murder, is ahead of him. He does not notice whether you obey his order, taking it for granted that you would want to fly from the scene of such a dreadful crime. You use this moment to hide yourself behind a hole in the wall. Desperately you follow the brief conversation between Pizarro and your husband. Prepare your outbreak - in coming slowly down the last steps of the stair, pressed against the wall, crawling toward Pizarro. With a violent jump you place yourself between him and Florestan with your - "Zurück !" Pizarro, shocked for the moment, steps back in surprise, but then he grips your hand harshly and whirls you around, away from Florestan. With a quick step, you are elastic and clever as a tigress, you are back at his side, standing again between him and Pizarro. Your cry - "Kill first his wife" is like a bombshell and seems to interrupt and halt the attempt at murder. Pizarro steps back astounded, as does also Rocco who has hidden in terror - and Florestan's cry -

"My wife" comes to you like a voice from Heaven. But you have no time to loose, no time to think of anything but keeping Pizarro from his dreadful deed. Your right hand rests on your gun(leatherbag) your eyes are fixed on Pizarro. Your left hand grips Florestan for a moment and you say trembling - "Yes I am Leonore"! Leave him immediately and face Pizarro directly and without distraction. Prepare the quick action with which you take the gun from your bag and point it at Pizarro, with your whole body. Pizarro shrinks back - in the same second the trumpet is heard behind the scene. This is the sign that Fernando, the Ambassador of the king, has arrived. He, who would have discovered Florestan, whom he had believed dead, in the dungeon. That would have been the end of the man who put him there, - the end of Pizarro. For this reason Pizarro wanted to kill Florestan before the arrival of Fernando. The trumpet signal means freedom for Florestan, arrest for Pizarro. So when you hear the signal, you know - "MY HUSBAND IS SAVED!" The signal comes to you like the voice of God himself, who gives back to you all the happiness which you had lost.

You almost loose consciousness, swaying, stumbling, you press yourself against Florestan, at the same time protecting him and seeking strength in his embrace. Your hand with the gun still points unconsciously at Pizarro, and at the end of the divinely beautiful quartet "Ah you are saved.." it is a movement from Pizarro which brings you back to reality. As long as Pizarro is there, you have to be watchful, as he is still a threat to Florestan. He may yet in desperation of his lost cause, murder Florestan, in revenge and helpless fury. So you are blazing attention again, holding him back with your gun.

Jaquino suddenly appears at the top of the stair - light falls into the dungeon from above. In a voice trembling with joy he tells of the Minister Fernando's arrival. Rocco, relieved beyond words, says in a triumphant tone, that they will come immediately, and that they will bring Pizarro up to Fernando. Rocco is more than happy. He is really an honest man and has suffered under the cruelties of his master Pizarro. Now he knows that Pizarro's power is broken, and humanity, not cruelty, will reign over this prison in the future.

Jaquino waits at the top of the stair. Rocco and Pizarro leave the stage. You follow Pizarro with the gun pointed at him, thus holding him in your power. Full of fury he throws his knife at you and disappears. You have, by a quick movement, avoided the knife. Now, seeing him disappear, your strength completely leaves you, you sway, and with a gesture of triumph throw the gun away, on the second fortissimo chord.



Then you loose consciousness and fall, groping at the wall for support.

There is a moment of silence. (If Florestan speaks too soon, he breaks the spell.) At the sound of his voice your consciousness returns, stumbling you try to rise, swaying as if you were intoxicated. When he says - "Oh Leonore, what have you done for me?" your face is alight, beneath streaming tears and your answer is an almost inaudible sob. You are now so weak that it takes all your strength to speak. "Nichts" is only a trembling, quivering sigh, - stumble forward blindly, in the direction of Florestan. You fall into one another's arms as if you were half drowned.

The duet is sung, as if in a state of intoxicated ecstasy.

After "so übergrosse Lust" you stand back for a second, looking at him, taking him immediately into your arms again. At "O dank Dir, Gott, für diese Lust", you leave him with a swaying step to the right, but then immediately embrace him again. At the end of the duet you take both his hands, guiding him up the stairs. The light falls upon you both as you walk upwards into the light, into freedom.

Act II, Scene II

You are changed now. You are no longer Fidelio - the heroic daring man, but Leonore, the loving wife. Your bearing is soft, deeply relaxed. It is as if you prefer, now, only to melt into the background. Your mission is fulfilled. Your husband is free. Now you want only to devote yourself completely to him, to his care, to his recovery from the terrible ordeal he has experienced in the prison. It is almost embarrassing for you to appear now in a man's clothing before all these people.

When you come out with Florestan, you guide him carefully, only attending to him, to nothing else.

You scarcely react when Pizarro tries to defend himself and to accuse Rocco. Only a slight gesture assures Fernando that Rocco is telling the truth. When Rocco presents you to Fernando, as Leonore, - Florestan's wife, you bow gracefully before him. Always realize that you are a woman in a high social position, accustomed to be gracious to people, not humble. You feel humbly about your heroic deed, but you are not humble as you receive the expression of respect which is due you as Florestan's wife. So - receive the respect of Fernando with the graciousness of a great lady.

Fernando now orders that the keys to Florestan's chains be given to you and bowing before you asks that you, yourself remove the chains from Florestan, as only you have the right to remove the last evidence of his imprisonment. You take the key, open the chains with a hasty gesture and take them up in your hands as if they were something very precious. (For two years these chains have been fastened about your husband. You feel as though they were a part of him, - a suffering, tortured part. You have been blessed in being the one to remove them from him, both in reality and in a deeper sense. So you touch them with great emotion.) Sing with deep feeling "Oh God! Oh God! What a blissful moment!" Give the chains to Jaquino and take Florestan's hands, now freed of their heavy burden, into yours. With a gesture of delicate and sweet devotion you bend down, pressing your cheek against the scars which the chains have made upon his wrists. Raise your head slowly and sing, with your hands folded, as if in prayer, the beautiful ensemble "O Gott, o welch ein Augenblick", deeply moved and with the softest of expressions.

When the "allegro ma non troppo" starts, you step away from Florestan looking at him ecstatically and returning immediately into his embrace. You are both at the left side of the stage. When Florestan, taking the center of the stage, sings your praises, you bow your head in humility, - but raise it at the word - "Retterin". (Yes, - you are proud and happy that you have been so blessed as to be the one to save him.) Walking to him you answer his praise with a jubilant repetition of your happiness that he is yours again.

The ending of this act lies in the hands of the stage manager. In Vienna and Salzburg, we walked to Fernando receiving his congratulations. You shake hands with Rocco warmly and for a moment you give Marcelline an apologetic smile, taking her outstretched hands with great friendliness, glad that you are forgiven.

You and Florestan then have the center of the stage. Receiving the enthusiastic expressions of delight from all around you, you bow graciously to the people but are always near Florestan, in his embrace.

And now Good Luck again! My whole heart will be with you.