

“Il segreto per esser felici,” (The secret of being happy) -Maffio Orsini's aria from *Lucrezia Borgia*, Act II, by Gaetano Donizetti, 1833

SYNOPSIS: Gennaro, Lucrezia's son (a fact he doesn't know) hates the cruel Borgias and ignores his mother's advice to flee the court. At a party, Orsini, Gennaro's closest friend, sings a drinking song; Gennaro joins in the toast, not knowing that his mother has poisoned the wine to avenge the insults her son's companions have thrown at her. When she realizes she has inadvertently killed her only child, Lucrezia quickly follows him in death.

ORSINI (mezzo-soprano; a “pants” role)

Il segreto per esser felici  
so per prova e l'insegno agli amici.  
Sia sereno, sia nubilo il cielo,  
ogni tempo, sia caldo, sia gelo,  
scherzo e bevo, e derido gl'insani  
che si dan del futuro pensier.  
Non curiamo l'incerto domani,  
se quest'oggi n'è dato a goder.

The big secret of being contented  
I've learned well and can teach it to friends:  
If the sky is clear, sunny or cloudy,  
in any weather, be it hot or cold,  
I make merry, drink, and mock the fools  
who worry what the future holds..  
Let's not think of uncertain tomorrow,  
if today is for us to enjoy.

La strofa è presta.  
Profittiamo degli'anni fiorenti,  
Il piacer li fa correr più lenti;  
se vecchiezza con livida faccia  
stammi a tergo e mia vita minaccia,  
scherzo e bevo, e derido gl'insani  
che si dan del futuro pensier.  
Non curiamo l'incerto domani,  
se quest'oggi n'è dato a goder.

The moral's a short one:  
Let us profit from our youthful years.  
Pleasure makes them pass more slowly;  
If old age, with an envious face,  
sneaks up behind and threatens my life,  
I make merry, drink, and mock the fools  
who worry whatt the future holds.  
Let's not think of uncertain tomorrow,  
if today is for us to enjoy.

--From “Young Artists, Recital 3,” sponsored by Santa Cruz Opera Society,  
(SCOSI), ©1980

---