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LSO Live

VERDI **FALSTAFF**

Sir Colin Davis

London Symphony Orchestra

Michele Pertusi
Carlos Alvarez
Ana Ibarra
Marina Domashenko
Jane Henschel
Maria José Moreno
Bülent Bezdüz
London Symphony Chorus

GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813–1901) **Falstaff (1893)**

Commedia lirica in tre atti

A commedia lirica in three acts

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Words by Arrigo Boito

(after William Shakespeare's plays *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *King Henry IV*)

Published by BMG Ricordi S.p.A., Milan / United Music Publishers Ltd., London.

Michele Pertusi *baritone* **SIR JOHN FALSTAFF**

Carlos Alvarez *baritone* **FORD**

Bülent Bezdüz *tenor* **FENTON**

Alasdair Elliott *tenor* **DR CAJUS**

Peter Hoare *tenor* **BARDOLFO**

Darren Jeffrey *bass* **PISTOLA**

Ana Ibarra *soprano* **ALICE FORD**

Maria José Moreno *soprano* **NANNETTA**

Jane Henschel *alto* **MRS QUICKLY**

Marina Domashenko *mezzo-soprano* **MEG PAGE**

Sir Colin Davis conductor

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LONDON SYMPHONY CHORUS

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Classic Sound Ltd recording, editing and mastering facilities

Ian Watson and **Jenni Whiteside** for *Classic Sound Ltd* editors

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Michele Pertusi and
Sir Colin Davis during
rehearsals for *Falstaff*,
May 2004

CD1		Total	54'52"
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ATTO PRIMO, parte prima/ACT I, part one

1	Falstaff! (<i>Dr. Cajus, Falstaff, Bardolfo, Pistola</i>)	4'59"	p20
2	6 polli: 6 scellini (<i>Falstaff, Bardolfo, Pistola</i>)	5'41"	p23
3	Sir John, in quest'intrigo... (<i>Bardolfo, Falstaff, Pistola</i>)	4'54"	p25

ATTO PRIMO, parte seconda/ACT I, part two

4	Alice. Meg. Nannetta (<i>Meg, Alice, Quickly, Nannetta</i>)	1'14"	p26
5	Leggi. Fulgida Alice! (<i>Meg, Alice, Quickly, Nannetta</i>)	2'20"	p27
6	Mostro! (<i>Alice, Nannetta Quickly, Meg, Dr Cajus, Bardolfo, Ford, Pistola, Fenton</i>)	1'38"	p28
7	In due parole: (<i>Pistola, Dr Cajus, Ford, Bardolfo, Fenton, Nannetta, Alice, Meg, Quickly</i>)	1'25"	p31
8	Pst, pst, Nannetta. (<i>Fenton, Nannetta, Alice, Meg, Quickly,</i>)	3'13"	p33
9	Torno all'assalto. (<i>Fenton, Nannetta, Bardolfo, Ford, Pistola</i>)	2'54"	p35
10	Del tuo barbaro diagnostico (<i>Dr. Cajus, Pistola, Ford, Bardolfo, Fenton Alice, Meg, Nannetta, Quickly,</i>)	2'35"	p36

ATTO SECONDO, parte prima/ACT II, part prima

11	Siam pentiti e contriti. (<i>Bardolfo, Pistola, Falstaff, Quickly</i>)	5'51"	p39
12	Alice è mia! (<i>Falstaff, Bardolfo</i>)	2'02"	p41
13	Signore (<i>Ford, Falstaff, Bardolfo, Pistola</i>)	2'40"	p41
14	C'è a Windsor una dama, (<i>Ford, Falstaff</i>)	6'46"	p42
15	È sogno? o realtà? (<i>Ford, Falstaff</i>)	4'27"	p44
16	Eccomi qua. (<i>Ford, Falstaff</i>)	2'07"	p45

CD2		Total	63'47"
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ATTO SECONDO, parte seconda/ACT II, part two

1	Presenteremo un bill, (<i>Alice, Quickly, Meg, Nannetta</i>)	4'07"	p45
2	Gaie comari di Windsor, (<i>Alice, Quickly, Nannetta, Meg</i>)	1'33"	
3	p48		
4	Alfin t'ho colto (<i>Falstaff, Alice</i>)	3'18"	p49
5	Quand'ero paggio (<i>Falstaff, Alice, Quickly, Meg, Ford, Bardolfo, Pistola</i>)	3'47"	p50
6	Vien qua. (<i>Nannetta, Fenton, Dr Cajus, Ford, Pistola, Bardolfo</i>)	1'37"	p54
7	C'è. C'è (<i>Ford, Dr Cajus, Quickly, Meg, Bardolfo, Pistola, Falstaff, Fenton, Nannetta, Coro, Alice</i>)	2'37"	p56
	Tutto delira. (<i>Nannetta, Fenton, Ford, Bardolfo, Dr Cajus, Pistola, Meg, Quickly, Nannetta, Falstaff</i>)	2'51"	p59

ATTO TERZO, parte pima/ACT III, part one

8			
9	Ehi! Taverniere! (<i>Falstaff</i>)	3'18"	p62
10	Va, Vecchio John, va (<i>Falstaff</i>)	2'49"	p62
11	Reverenza. (<i>Quickly, Falstaff</i>)	2'29"	p63
12	Il Cacciatore nero (<i>Quickly, Falstaff, Ford, Nannetta, Meg, Alice, Fenton</i>)	3'31"	p64
	Sarai la Fata (<i>Alice, Nannetta, Meg, Fenton, Dr Cajus, Quickly</i>)	4'06"	p65

ATTO TERZO, parte seconda III, ACT III part two

13			
14	Dal labbro il canto estasiato vola (<i>Fenton, Nannetta, Alice, Quickly, Meg</i>)	4'31"	p67
15	Una, due, tre, quattro, (<i>Falstaff</i>)	2'30"	p68

16	Odo un soave passo! (<i>Falstaff</i>)	1'19"	p68
17	Ninfe! Elfi! Silfi! (<i>Nannetta, Falstaff, Alice, Fate</i>)	5'38"	p69
18	Alto là! (<i>Bardolfo, Pistola, Falstaff, Quickly, Alice, Meg, Nannetta, Fate, Ford, Imps</i>)	0'58"	p71
19	Pizzica, pizzica, (<i>Alice, Quickly, Meg, Falstaff, Dr Cajus, Ford, Pistola, Bardolfo, Coro</i>)	5'05"	p72
20	Ogni sorta di gente dozzinale (<i>Falstaff, All, Ford</i>)	1'04"	p76
21	Già s'avanza la coppia degli sposi (<i>Ford, Alice, Dr Cajus, Falstaff, Bardolfo, Fenton, Nannetta</i>)	3'03"	p76
	Tutto, nel mondo è burla. (<i>All</i>)	3'30"	p78
TOTAL		118'39"	



Carlos Alvarez during rehearsals for *Falstaff*, May 2004

GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813-1901) **Falstaff (1893)**

If there is such a thing as the perfect opera, then it surely has to be *Falstaff*. The most determinedly sour-puss critic - and there are such things - could scarcely find fault with it, as they might, say, with *The Marriage of Figaro* or *Die Walküre*. Even that most puritanical of commentators, Joseph Kerman, the assassin of *Tosca* ('shabby little shocker'), heaps praise in his *Opera as Drama* on *Falstaff* as Verdi's 'greatest and most paradoxical masterpiece', adding that it transcends Shakespeare.

Indeed it does, and for that praise must be shared with the librettist, Arrigo Boito. After their successful collaboration on the Simon Boccanegra revisions and *Otello*, he was the instigator of the *Falstaff* project, though ever since the failure of the early *Un giorno di regno*, Verdi had wanted to write another comedy, and the character of *Falstaff* had been mentioned. Verdi had already created one memorable comic character - seriously comic, and vice versa - in *Fra Melitone in La forza del destino*. But when Boito sent the composer his outline of a libretto in 1889, the composer's reaction was immediate and enthusiastic: 'excellent, no-one could have done it better'.

Which is true. Boito's filleting of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, arguably the nearest Shakespeare came to writing a pot-boiler, is brilliant: the conflation of *Shallow* and *Slender* into *Dr Caius*, the transference of *Ann/Nannetta's* parentage and elimination of *Mr Page*, reducing from three to two the gullings of *Falstaff* (out goes his disguise as the old woman of *Brainford*) and the inclusion of passages from *Henry IV* to flesh out the central character - all are masterfully achieved.

The plot may still be action-packed, but it is clear and taut. And Boito's actual words are just as masterful, with highly coloured syntax inspired by Italian archaisms from Shakespeare's time, and the internal and external rhymes adding their own rhythm and momentum.

No composer, surely, could want a more inspiring springboard for his imagination, and Verdi acknowledged this. 'If the words are expressed properly, the music will be born of itself,' he wrote, and *Falstaff* is an example of perfect fusion and words and notes in *utroque*. After token demurral about his age and whether he would be able to finish the work - he was nudging 80 at the time of the premiere in 1893 - and despite taking time off in the summer months to attend to his farm, the collaboration was trouble-free, witness the cheerfulness of the exchanges of letters, and Verdi in the past had often been brutal with his librettists. Here there was perfect trust, the minor adjustments to the text made with perfect equanimity. Not even the inevitable leak in the press about the project threw Verdi off balance. 'I have written it for my own pleasure,' he wrote to his publisher, Ricordi.

Enjoyment indeed shines from every bar. In its irresistible forward impulse, its effortless melody, its rhythmic vitality and sureness of dramatic pace and construction, *Falstaff* is both a wise and loving homage to Rossini and the great tradition of Italian opera buffa (comic opera), and a ready explanation of why Verdi had for so long wanted to write another comedy. And as such Verdi scholars as Julian Budden and Roger Parker have reminded us, there is also a musical message for the times. For all the flurried action of the opening scene, it is set to a perfect little sonata movement; the opera ends with a fugue, that

most academic of forms; the second act concludes with an almost conventional slow concertato ensemble and fast stretta (faster tempo in the concluding passage). Perhaps this is a wise old conservative's warning about the excesses of the verismo (realist) school of Italian opera nosing over the horizon.

Like all great comedy, Falstaff is intensely serious, and not only in its status as a satyr-play to Otello: both deal with adultery and jealousy. Falstaff is about conflict: class conflict, gender conflict and generation conflict, all these conflicts resolved through laughter. The world is changing, as it was in Shakespeare's time, and Verdi's. The rise of a new (and monied) merchant class, the decline of an old (and impoverished) aristocracy, all encapsulated in Falstaff's masterly little monologue at the opening of the third act, 'Mondo ladro'. It's a real, Victor Meldrew-style saloon-bar lament: everything's going to the dogs, what's happened to traditional values? The minor-key reminiscence of the Fat Knight's triumphant second-act monologue, 'Va, vecchio John', is a moment of infinite sadness:

just keep going while all around is falling apart. And a moment that can (and should) move an audience to tears is swept away in gales of trilling laughter as the mulled wine takes its effect. It is a sequence of blazing operatic genius. There are two aspects of the piece with special appeal today. Women are in the ascendant throughout - the men don't stand a chance, and Alice Ford, so commanding, so shrewd, so unfailingly good-humoured, is one of the great operatic heroines. The other lies in the music for Nannetta and Fenton, so fresh, so lyrical in their little duets in the second scene, so impassioned later in Windsor Park. It is nice to learn that the original singers were indeed lovers, and married soon after the premiere. Here is a wise old man's memory of the splendours of young love, heard through rose-tinted ears, maybe, but for those of us no longer in the first flush of youth almost unbearably moving. Comedy, then, but comedy filled with human truth, and above all enjoyable.

Programme note © Rodney Milnes



Marina Domashenko and Ana Ibarra during rehearsals for Falstaff, May 2004

SYNOPSIS

Act I

The Garter Inn

Falstaff, busy writing letters, is berated by a furious Dr Caius, who accuses his servants, Bardolph and Pistol, of getting him drunk and robbing him. Caius is mocked for his pains, and storms out. Falstaff tells his retainers that they must learn to steal more artistically. Going through his accounts, he is reminded that he is near penury, and without food and wine he might lose weight and hence his whole personality. Thus his plan: he has written love letters to the wives of two rich merchants, believing them to hold their husbands' purse strings, and orders Bardolph and Pistol to deliver them. They refuse: it would offend their sense of honour. Having sent his page on this delicate errand, Falstaff lectures his servants on 'honour', an abstract, meaningless concept, and chases them out of the inn.

The garden of Ford's house

Alice Ford and her daughter Nannetta meet Meg Page and Mistress Quickly. Alice and Meg show each other Falstaff's letters and discover that they have received precisely the same proposal. They collapse with laughter, and promise revenge.

Ford enters, buttonholed by Dr Caius (who is complaining about Falstaff and his retainers), by Bardolph and Pistol themselves (revealing Falstaff's plans to seduce Alice and lay hands on his money), and by Fenton, who offers his services, anxious to ingratiate himself with Ford since he is love with Nannetta. Amidst the comings and goings, Nannetta and Fenton find themselves alone, and sing of their love ('Labbra di foco'). The Merry Wives continue their plotting:

Mistress Quickly is to offer Falstaff an assignation with Alice. The lovers meet once more. Ford plans to visit Falstaff in disguise. The act ends with an intricate ensemble in which all relish what is in store for the Fat Knight.

Act II

The Garter Inn

Bardolph and Pistol feign repentance to their master, and announce Mistress Quickly. In a richly comic duet ('Reverenza!') she informs him that the lovesick Alice is always free of her husband between two and three pm, and further whets his appetite by adding that Meg Page, too, is infatuated with him. As she leaves, Falstaff celebrates with a triumphant monologue: age has diminished neither his appeal nor his capability ('Va, vecchio John').

Bardolph and Pistol now introduce 'Signor Fontana' (Ford in disguise), who has come armed with wine and a substantial purse, both calculated to appeal to Falstaff. 'Fontana' seeks his help in seducing Alice Ford, who has rejected him; if she were first to submit to Falstaff, he might stand a better chance. Falstaff tells him he has an assignation that very afternoon, and will soon be cuckolding her stupid husband. Left alone while Falstaff smartens himself up, Ford gives vent to an outburst of jealous rage ('È sogno? o realtà'), swearing to catch and punish the guilty pair.

Ford's house

Mistress Quickly tells Alice and Meg of the success of her mission. Nannetta enters weeping. Her father has ordered her to marry Dr Caius, but Alice reassures her that this will not happen before preparing the scene for Falstaff's humiliation. The main props are a screen

and a laundry basket. Falstaff enters to woo Alice with exaggerated courtliness, and when she remarks upon his size he recalls, in a delicious arietta ('Quand'ero paggio del Duca di Norfolk'), that he was once beanpole-slender. Mistress Quickly announces Meg, who 'warns' Alice that her husband is on his way with murder in mind. Quickly returns in panic with the news that he really is. Falstaff is hidden in the laundry basket. While Ford ransacks his house Nannetta and Fenton find a quiet place behind the screen for a cuddle. The sound of a kiss convinces Ford that it is his wife with Falstaff. In the confusion of the lovers' discovery, Alice orders her servants to empty the laundry basket into the Thames and forces her husband to acknowledge the extent of his folly.

Act III

Outside the Garter Inn

In a magnificent monologue ('Mondo ladro') a well-soaked Falstaff bemoans the state of the world. Old values are in decline, virtue has gone, only his belly saved him from drowning, but a glass of mulled wine restores his spirits. Mistress Quickly brings a message from Alice suggesting a repeat performance in Windsor Park at Herne's Oak. Falstaff is to disguise himself as the Black Huntsman. As they retire to the inn, Alice, Meg and Ford enter to distribute parts for the evening's masquerade. As they in turn retire, Quickly overhears Ford planning to use the occasion to marry Nannetta to Caius, who is to wear a monk's habit.

Windsor Park

Fenton sings of his love ('Dal labbro il canto'). Alice gives him a monk's habit. Falstaff enters wearing the demon huntsman's horns.

A skirmish with both Alice and Meg is interrupted by the song of the Queen of the Fairies - Nannetta's role ('Sul fil d'un soffio') - and Falstaff knows that whoever sees immortals must die. As he hides his face the whole company of fairies torment him until he recognises one goblin as Bardolph. He also recognises 'Signor Fontana', and all is explained. He accepts his gulling gracefully: without him, the world would be a duller place. Ford 'marries' both Caius and Nannetta and another couple who happen to be passing, Fenton and the real Nannetta. Caius is distressed to discover that he has married Bardolph. Falstaff tells Ford that he is not the only man to have been gulled before leading the company in a joyful fugue: 'Tutto nel mondo è burla' - 'All the world's a joke ... he who laughs last laughs best'.

Synopsis © Rodney Milnes

Rodney Milnes has been writing and broadcasting about opera most of his life, most recently as chief opera critic of The Times (1992-2002). He was editor of Opera Magazine from 1986-1999.

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) Falstaff (1893)

Si l'existence de l'opéra parfait était envisageable, ce serait certainement Falstaff. Les critiques les plus aigris - et Dieu sait qu'il en existe - peinent à lui trouver quelque défaut, alors qu'ils y réussiraient à propos de partitions comme Les Noces de Figaro ou La Walkyrie. Même l'exégète le plus sévère, Joseph Kerman, qui assassina Tosca («minable petite œuvre à sensations»), redouble dans L'Opéra comme drame de louanges sur Falstaff : il y voit le «chef-d'œuvre le plus grand et le plus paradoxal» de Verdi, ajoutant que le compositeur y transcende Shakespeare.

C'est le cas, en effet ; mais ce compliment doit également s'adresser au librettiste, Arrigo Boito. Certes, malgré l'échec d'un ouvrage de jeunesse, Un giorno di regno, Verdi avait parfois envisagé d'écrire un autre ouvrage bouffe ; certes, il avait déjà mentionné le personnage de Falstaff. Mais c'est Boito qui fut l'instigateur du projet de Falstaff, après leur collaboration fructueuse à la version révisée de Simon Boccanegra et à Otello. Verdi avait déjà créé un personnage bouffe mémorable - d'une bouffonnerie sérieuse, et inversement : Fra Melitone, dans La Force du destin. Mais, lorsque le compositeur reçut l'esquisse du livret en 1889, sa réaction fut immédiate et enthousiaste : «Excellent, personne n'aurait pu faire mieux.»

Et c'est la vérité. La manière dont Boito extrait le suc des Joyeuses Commères, la pièce certainement où Shakespeare fut le plus près d'écrire une œuvre alimentaire, est tout simplement brillante : la synthèse de Shallow et Slender en Docteur Caius, la nouvelle filiation d'Ann/Nannetta et l'élimination de Mister

Page, réduisant de trois à deux le nombre des dupes endurées par Falstaff (il ne subit plus son déguisement en vieille femme de Brainford) et l'inclusion de passages d'Henry IV afin d'étoffer le personnage principal, tout cela est réussi avec maestria. L'intrigue a beau rester pleine de rebondissements, elle se déroule avec clarté et concision. Et les vers de Boito sont eux aussi magistraux, avec une syntaxe haute en couleur qui s'inspire d'archaïsmes italiens remontant à l'époque de Shakespeare, et des rimes internes et externes ajoutant leur rythme propre et leur élan.

Aucun compositeur ne pouvait espérer meilleur tremplin à son imagination, et Verdi fut le premier à le reconnaître. «Si les mots sont exprimés de manière appropriée, la musique naîtra d'elle-même», écrivit-il un jour, et Falstaff est un exemple de fusion parfaite entre les mots et les sons à l'opéra. Après que Verdi eut protesté de son âge et de sa capacité à mener l'entreprise à son terme - il frôlait les quatre-vingts ans au moment de la création, en 1893 - et bien qu'il se soit éloigné de la table de travail durant les mois d'été, pour s'occuper de ses terres, la collaboration se déroula sans heurts ; en témoigne le ton enjoué de la correspondance entre les deux hommes, alors que, par le passé, Verdi s'était souvent montré brutal à l'égard de ses librettistes. Dans le cas présent, la confiance était entière, et les quelques retouches apportées au texte se firent dans un climat de parfaite sérénité. Même les inévitables fuites dans la presse ne réussirent pas à démonter le compositeur. «Je l'ai composé pour mon propre plaisir», écrivit-il à son éditeur, Ricordi.

C'est un fait, ce plaisir transparait dans chaque mesure. Par son élan irrésistible, par sa mélodie jaillissant sans effort, par sa vitalité rythmique et la

sûreté de sa construction, Falstaff rend un hommage avisé et affectueux à Rossini et à la grande tradition de l'opéra buffa italienne ; il fournit également la meilleure des explications à ce désir que Verdi avait depuis si longtemps d'écrire une autre comédie. Par ailleurs, ainsi que nous le rappellent des spécialistes de Verdi comme Julian Budden et Roger Parker, l'ouvrage délivre également un message musical à son époque. Par exemple, la scène initiale, au déroulement si agité, se déroule selon une parfaite petite forme sonate et l'ouvrage s'achève par une fugue, la forme la plus académique qui soit ; l'acte II se conclut par la succession assez conventionnelle d'un ensemble concertato et d'une strette rapide (section conclusive au tempo plus vif). Peut-être s'agit-il d'une sage mise en garde contre les excès du vérisme, le courant réaliste de l'opéra italien, qui pointait à l'horizon.

Comme toutes les grandes comédies, Falstaff est profondément sérieux, et pas seulement parce qu'il apparaît comme une satire d'Otello : tous deux traitent en effet d'adultère et de jalousie. Falstaff met en scène des conflits : conflits de classes, conflits de sexes et conflits de générations, qui tous se résolvent par le rire. Le monde change, à l'époque de Shakespeare comme à celle de Verdi. La montée d'une classe commerçante nouvelle (et argentée), le déclin d'une aristocratie vieillie (et appauvrie), tout cela est résumé par le monologue bref et magistral de Falstaff au début de l'acte III, «Mondo ladro». Il s'agit de véritables bougonneries de comptoir comme peut en faire Victor Meldrew [héros ronchon et poursuivi par la guigne d'une série télévisée anglaise des années 1990, One Foot in the Grave, N.d.l.t.] : tout fiche le camp, que deviennent les vraies valeurs ? L'irruption dans le mode mineur du monologue triomphant de Falstaff à l'acte II, «Va, vecchio John», est un instant d'une infinie tristesse : garde

ton cap, tandis que tout alentour tombe en ruine. Mais ce moment propre à tirer les larmes du public est balayé par des éclats de rire, figurés par des trilles de plus en plus envahissants, à mesure que le vin chaud produit son effet. Cet enchaînement témoigne d'un génie opératique hors du commun.

Deux aspects de l'ouvrage exercent aujourd'hui un attrait particulier. Tout d'abord, les femmes montent en puissance tout au long de l'ouvrage - les hommes n'ont pas la moindre chance de prendre le dessus -, et Alice Ford, si autoritaire, si astucieuse, d'une humeur si indéfectible, est l'une des grandes héroïnes du répertoire. L'autre élément est la musique dévolue à Nannetta et Fenton, si fraîche, si lyrique dans leurs petits duos de la deuxième scène, si passionnée plus tard dans le parc de Windsor. On se réjouit de savoir que les premiers interprètes de ces rôles s'aimaient à la ville comme à la scène, et se marièrent peu de temps après la création. Ici, un vieil homme sage se remémore la beauté des jeunes amours, vues peut-être à travers des lunettes roses mais, pour ceux d'entre nous qui ne sont plus à la fleur de l'âge, incroyablement émouvantes. Comédie, donc, mais comédie pleine de vérité humaine, et surtout savoureuse.

Notes de programme © Rodney Milnes
Traduction Claire Delamarche

SYNOPSIS

ACTE I

L'Auberge de la Jarretière

Occupé à écrire des lettres, Falstaff est admonesté par un Docteur Caius furieux, qui accuse ses serviteurs, Bardolphe et Pistole, de l'avoir saoulé puis dépouillé. Les malheurs de Caius ne recueillent que des moqueries, et il s'en va. Falstaff dit à ses serviteurs qu'ils doivent apprendre à voler avec plus d'art. Faisant ses comptes, il se rend compte qu'il est au bord de la ruine ; or, privé de boisson et de nourriture, il perdrait sa panse et, sans elle, Falstaff ne serait plus Falstaff. Il dévoile son plan : il a écrit des lettres d'amour aux femmes de deux riches marchands dont il pense qu'elles tiennent les cordons de la bourse conjugale. Il ordonne à Bardolphe et Pistole de porter ces lettres à leurs destinataires. Ils refusent : cela offenserait leur sens de l'honneur. Après avoir confié cette mission délicate à son page, Falstaff fait à ses serviteurs un long sermon sur l'honneur, concept abstrait et dépourvu de sens, avant de les chasser hors de l'auberge.

Le jardin de chez Ford

Alice Ford et sa fille Nannetta rencontrent Meg Page et Mistress Quickly. Alice et Meg se montrent leurs lettres respectives et se rendent compte qu'elles sont strictement identiques. Elles éclatent de rire et jurent de se venger.

Ford fait son entrée. Il est flanqué par le Docteur Caius (qui se plaint de Falstaff et de ses serviteurs), Bardolphe et Pistole eux-mêmes (qui dévoilent à Ford le stratagème de Falstaff pour séduire Alice et faire main basse sur son argent) et Fenton, qui lui offre ses

services, désireux d'entrer dans ses bonnes grâces car il est épris de Nannetta.

Au milieu des allées et venues, Nannetta et Fenton se retrouvent seuls et chantent leur amour («Labbra di foco»). Les joyeuses commères continuent de comploter : Mistress Quickly doit transmettre à Falstaff un rendez-vous avec Alice. Les amoureux se retrouvent de nouveau. Ford décide de rendre visite à Falstaff sous un déguisement. L'acte s'achève par un ensemble complexe où chacun se réjouit de ce qui attend le Chevalier ventru.

ACTE II

L'Auberge de la Jarretière

Bardolphe et Pistole feignent le repentir auprès de leur maître et annoncent Mistress Quickly. Dans un duo du plus haut effet comique («Reverenza !»), celle-ci informe Falstaff qu'Alice est transie d'amour pour lui et que son mari la laisse libre chaque après-midi de deux heures à trois ; elle aiguise un peu plus son appétit en ajoutant que Meg Page éprouve elle aussi de tendres sentiments à son égard. A son départ, Falstaff laisse éclater sa joie dans un monologue triomphant : l'âge n'a diminué ni son charme ni ses facultés («Va, vecchio John»).

Bardolphe et Pistole introduisent ensuite un certain «Signor Fontana», qui se présente armé de vin et d'une bourse bien remplie, dans le but d'amadouer Falstaff. Fontana «lui demande son aide : il séduire Alice Ford, qui lui a opposé un refus ; si elle cédait tout d'abord à Falstaff, il aurait ensuite plus de facilités à parvenir à ses fins. Falstaff lui répond qu'il a rendez-vous l'après-midi même et s'apprête à cocufier son idiot de mari. Resté seul tandis que Falstaff se pomponne, Ford laisse éclater sa colère et sa jalousie («E sogno ? o realtà»),

jurant de démasquer et de punir le couple adultère.

Chez Ford

Mistress Quickly raconte à Alice et Meg le succès remporté par sa mission. Nannetta entre en sanglotant : son père lui a ordonné d'épouser le docteur Caius. Alice la rassure : rien de tel n'arrivera. Les principaux accessoires de la scène sont un paravent et une corbeille à linge. Falstaff entre et fait à Alice une cour effrénée. Lorsqu'elle évoque son embonpoint, il se rappelle, dans une délicieuse arietta («Quand'ero paggio del Duca di Norfolk»), qu'il était autrefois mince et agile. Mistress Quickly fait entrer Meg, venue «prévenir» Alice que son mari est en chemin avec des idées de meurtre. Quickly surgit de nouveau, paniquant cette fois véritablement : Ford arrive en effet, hors de lui. On cache Falstaff dans la corbeille à linge. Tandis que Ford met la maison sens dessus dessous, Nannetta et Fenton trouvent la tranquillité derrière le paravent et s'enlacent. Le bruit de leur baiser convainc Ford qu'il s'agit de sa femme et de Falstaff. Dans la confusion accompagnant la découverte des deux tourtereaux, Alice ordonne à ses servantes de jeter le contenu de la corbeille dans la Tamise et oblige son mari à reconnaître l'étendue de sa déraison.

ACTE III

A l'extérieur de l'Auberge de la Jarretière Dans un magnifique monologue («Mondo ladrow»), Falstaff trempé jusqu'aux os se lamente sur l'état du monde. Les vieilles valeurs se perdent, la vertu n'est plus, il ne doit qu'à son ventre d'avoir échappé de la noyade ; mais un verre de vin chaud lui rend sa gaieté. Mistress Quickly apporte un message d'Alice, qui invite Falstaff à un divertissement masqué dans le parc de Windsor, au chêne de Herne. Falstaff doit se déguiser en Chasseur noir. Tandis qu'ils pénètrent tous deux dans

l'auberge, Alice, Meg et Ford arrivent et distribuent les rôles pour la mascarade du soir. Lorsqu'ils disparaissent à leur tour, Quickly surprend une conversation de Ford, qui veut profiter de l'occasion pour marier Nannetta à Caius, qui portera un habit de moine.

Parc de Windsor

Fenton chante son amour («Dal labbro il canto»). Alice lui donne un habit de moine. Falstaff entre, portant les cornes du diabolique chasseur.

Une altercation entre Alice et Meg est interrompue par la chanson de la Reine des fées - qui n'est autre que Nannetta («Sul fil d'un soffio»). Falstaff, sachant que celui qui voit des êtres immortels doit mourir, se jette au sol, face contre terre. Les fées et les elfes le tourmentent jusqu'à ce qu'il reconnaisse, sous un déguisement, les traits de Bardolphe. Il reconnaît également le «Signor Fontana», et on lui donne les explications nécessaires. Il accepte la duperie de bon cœur : sans lui, le monde serait dépourvu d'esprit. Ford célèbre les noces de Caius et Nannetta et d'un autre couple qui passe à ce moment-là, Fenton et la vraie Nannetta. Caius se rend compte qu'il a épousé Bardolphe. Falstaff dit à Ford qu'il n'est pas le seul à avoir été roulé, avant d'entraîner tout le monde dans la joyeuse fugue finale : «Tutto nel mondo è burla» (Tout dans le monde est farce... Rira bien qui rira le dernier).

Synopsis © Rodney Milnes

Depuis de nombreuses années, Rodney Milnes écrit et produit des émissions de radio sur l'opéra - notamment, très récemment, en tant que premier critique d'opéra du quotidien The Times (1992-2002). Il a été rédacteur en chef d'Opera Magazine de 1986 à 1999.

Traduction Claire Delamarche

GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813-1901) FALSTAFF (1893)

Wenn es tatsächlich so etwas wie eine perfekte Oper geben sollte, dann wäre das sicherlich Falstaff. Selbst der verbitterteste Sauertopf von einem Rezensenten - und die gibt es - könnte kaum etwas daran bekritlein, wie er vielleicht, sagen wir, in Le nozze di Figaro oder der Walküre vielleicht noch könnte. Sogar der Oberpunitar Joseph Kerman, der Mörder der Tosca („schäbiger kleiner Schocker“), überschüttet den Falstaff in seiner Abhandlung Opera as Drama [Oper als Drama] mit Lob und nennt ihn Verdis „größtes und paradoxestes Meisterwerk“, wobei er hinzufügt, dass Falstaff über Shakespeare hinausgeht.

Das geschieht wirklich, und dafür gebührt auch dem Librettisten Arrigo Boito das Lob. Nach der erfolgreichen Zusammenarbeit zwischen Verdi und Boito am Otello und den Revisionen zu Simone Bocanegra brachte der Librettist das Falstaff-Projekt ins Rollen. Die Figur des Falstoffs war allerdings schon zuvor im Gespräch gewesen, da Verdi nach dem Misserfolg seines frühen un giorno di regno immer wieder darüber nachdachte, eine weitere Komödie zu vertonen. Mit dem Fra Melitone in La forza del destino hatte Verdi dann auch eine denkwürdige komische Rolle geschaffen - ernsthaft komisch und anders herum. Als Boito nun dem Komponisten 1889 den Erstentwurf seines Falstaff-Librettos zusandte, war die Reaktion des Komponisten direkt und begeistert: „exzellent, niemand hätte es besser machen können“.

Das ist wahr. Boitos Filetieren der Lustigen Weiber von Windsor - ein Werk Shakespeares, das im Schaffen des Barden einer Gelegenheitsarbeit am nächsten kommt - ist hervorragend: Das Zusammenführen von Shallow und Slender in der Person des Dr. Cajus, die

Übertragung von Ännchens Eltern auf Nannetta, das Weglassen des Mr. Page, die Reduzierung von Falstoffs Abenteuern von drei auf zwei (die Verkleidung als dicke Frau von Brentford entfällt) und das Einfügen von Passagen aus Henry IV. zur Bereicherung der Rollen, all das wurde vorzüglich umgesetzt. Die Handlung mag zwar immer noch rasant sein, aber sie ist auch klar und gestrafft. Genauso hervorragend erweist sich Boitos Wortwahl mit ihrer stark eingefärbten Syntax, die von italienischen Archaismen aus Shakespeares Zeit angeregt wurde. Dazu fügen die Binnen- und Endreime ihren eigenen Rhythmus und Schwung hinzu.

Kein Komponist könnte sich wohl ein besseres Sprungbrett für seine schöpferische Arbeit vorstellen, und Verdi bestätigte das: „Wenn die Worte richtig gewählt sind, entsteht daraus die Musik von selbst“, schrieb er, und Falstaff ist ein Beispiel für eine perfekte Verschmelzung von Wort und Musik in der Oper. Nach einem eher gespielten Einwand unter Bezugnahme auf sein Alter und die Frage, ob er das Welt abzuschließen in der Lage wäre - immerhin stand Verdi zur Zeit der Uraufführung 1893 vor seinem 80. Geburtstag - und trotz der Pause in den Sommermonaten, um seinen Bauerhof zu versorgen, verlief die Zusammenarbeit reibungslos. Man braucht nur dem freundlichen Briefwechsel zu folgen. Dagegen ging Verdi in früheren Zeiten häufig brutal mit seinen Librettisten um. Beim Falstaff-Projekt gab es allerdings absolutes Vertrauen, die kleinen Änderungen am Text wurden im völligen Einvernehmen vorgenommen. Nicht einmal das unvermeidliche Durchsickern von Informationen über dieses Projekt in die Presse warf Verdi aus der Bahn.

„Ich habe es zu meinem eigenen Vergnügen komponiert“, schrieb er an seinen Verleger Ricordi.

Vergnügen spricht tatsächlich aus jedem Takt. Mit seinem unwiderstehlichen vorwärts drängenden Schwung, seiner mühelosen Liedhaftigkeit, seiner rhythmischen Vitalität und seiner Selbstsicherheit beim bünnengerechten Aufbau und Ablauf erweist sich Falstaff nicht nur als eine weise und liebevolle Verneigung vor Rossini und der großartigen Tradition der italienischen Opera buffa (komischen Oper), sondern liefert auch eine gute Erklärung, warum Verdi seit so langer Zeit eine weitere Komödie schreiben wollte. Als solches, wie uns die Verdi-Kenner Julian Budden und Roger Parker erinnert haben, gibt es auch eine musikalische Botschaft an die Zeit. Trotz des turbulenten Handlungsgeschehens in der ersten Szene ist diese Situation als perfekter kleiner Sonatensatz komponiert. Die Oper endet mit einer Fuge, der strengsten aller Formen. Der zweite Akt schließt mit einem fast konventionellen langsamen Concerto-Ensemble und einer flinken Stretta (schnelleres Tempo in der letzten Passage). Vielleicht dienen solche kompositorischen Mittel als Warnung eines weisen alten Konservativen vor den Exzessen der sich zu jener Zeit am Horizont abzeichnenden italienischen Verismo-(Realismus-)Opern.

Wie alle große Komödien ist auch Falstaff äußerst ernst, und das nicht nur aufgrund seiner Stellung als satyrartiges Gegenstück zum Otello: beide beschäftigen sich mit Ehebruch und Eifersucht. Im Falstaff geht es um Konflikt: Konflikt zwischen sozialen Schichten, Konflikt zwischen Mann und Frau sowie um den Generationskonflikt. Alle diese Konflikte werden durch Lachen gelöst. Die Welt verändert sich, wie auch zu Shakespeares Zeiten, und Verdis. Der Aufstieg einer neuen (und bemittelten) Schicht der Händler, der Niedergang einer alten (und verarmten) Aristokratie

werden in Falstaffs meisterlichen kleinen Monolog am Anfang des III. Akts, „Mondo ladro“, beschrieben. Es ist eine richtige Jammerweise in der Art misstrauter alter Herren: Alles kommt auf den Hund, was ist mit den guten alten Werten passiert? Die in Moll gehaltene Erinnerung des fetten Ritters im triumphierenden Monolog des II. Akts, „Va, vecchio John“, ist ein Moment unendlicher Traurigkeit: Nur weitermachen, auch wenn alles um dich herum zerfällt. Dieser Moment, der das Publikum zu Tränen rühren kann (und sollte), wird allerdings mit schallenden Lachensalven hinweggewischt, wenn der Glühwein seine Wirkung zeitigt. Es ist eine Opernszene vom absolut Feinsten. Es gibt zwei Aspekte in diesem Stück von spezieller Bedeutung für heute. Der eine betrifft die Frauen. Sie sind durchweg im Aufstieg begriffen - die Männer haben nicht die geringste Chance. Die alles so unter Kontrolle habende, so scharfsinnige, unfehlbar gutgelaunte Alice Ford ist tatsächlich eine der großen Opernheldinnen. Der andere Aspekt betrifft die Musik für Nannetta und Fenton. Sie ist so frisch, so lyrisch in den kleinen Duetten des Paares in der zweiten Szene, und so leidenschaftlich später im Windsor-Park. Mit Freude nimmt man zur Kenntnis, dass die Sänger der Uraufführung tatsächlich ineinander verliebt waren und kurz nach der Premiere heirateten. In dieser Musik spürt man die Erinnerung eines weisen alten Mannes an die Freuden der Jugendliebe, vielleicht mit rosaroten Ohren vernommen, aber für jene unter uns, die nicht mehr in den jüngsten Jahren sind, fast unerträglich ergreifend. Komödie also, aber eine mit menschlicher Wahrheit gefüllte Komödie, und vor allem vergnüglich.

Einführungstext © Rodney Milnes
Übersetzung aus dem Englischen: Elke Hockings

HANDLUNG

Akt I

Das Gasthaus „Zum Hosenbände“

Der geschäftig Briefe schreibende Falstaff wird vom wütenden Dr. Cajus heftig angegriffen, der wiederum Falstaffs Diener Bardolph und Pistol beschuldigt, ihn betrunken gemacht und bestohlen zu haben. Dr. Cajus wird wegen seines Ärgers verspottet und stürmt von dannen. Falstaff rät seinen Gefolgsleuten, sie sollen lernen, geschickter zu stehlen. Bei der Prüfung seiner Finanzen wird Falstaff daran erinnert, dass er fast am Bettelstab steht. Ohne Speise und Drank verliert er womöglich an Gewicht und damit seine ganze Persönlichkeit. Deshalb sein Plan: Er hat Liebesbriefe an die Frauen von zwei reichen Bürgern verfasst. Er glaubt nämlich, diese Damen halten die Zügel über das Einkommen ihrer Ehemänner in der Hand. Er befiehlt Bardolph und Pistol, die Briefe zuzustellen. Sie lehnen ab: Es würde ihrem Ehrgefühl widersprechen. Nachdem Falstaff seinen Pagen mit diesem delikaten Auftrag betraut hat, hält er seinen Dienern einen Vortrag über „Ehre“ - ein abstraktes, bedeutungsloses Konzept - und jagt sie aus dem Gasthaus.

In Garten von Fords Haus

Alice Ford und ihre Tochter Nannetta treffen Meg Page und Mrs. Quickly. Alice und Meg zeigen sich gegenseitig Falstaffs Brief und entdecken, dass sie haargenau den gleichen Auftrag erhielten. Sie brechen in schallendes Lachen aus und versprechen, sich zu rächen.

Ford ritt auf. Auf ihn redet Dr. Cajus ein (der sich über Falstaff und seine Diener beschwert). Auch Bardolph

und Pistol wenden sich an Ford (wobei sie Falstaffs Plan verraten, Alice zu verführen und sich des Geldes zu bemächtigen), wie auch Fenton, der sich wegen seiner Liebe zu Nannetta bei Ford einschmeicheln möchte und seine Dienste anbietet.

Bei all dem Kommen und Gehen sind Nannetta und Fenton doch plötzlich allein und singen von ihrer Liebe („Labbra di foco“). Die lustigen Weiber fahren mit ihrem geheimen Plan fort: Mrs. Quickly soll Falstaff ein Stelldichein mit Alice anbieten. Nannetta und Fenton treffen sich noch einmal. Ford gedenkt, Falstaff verkleidet aufzusuchen. Der Akt endet mit einem kniffligen Ensemble, in dem sich alle auf das freuen, was dem fetten Ritter bevorsteht.

Akt II

Das Gasthaus „Zum Hosenbände“

Bardolph und Pistol täuschen vor ihrem Herrn Reue vor und melden Mrs. Quickly. In einem enorm komischen Duett („Reverenza!“) berichtet sie Falstaff, dass die vor Liebe kranke Alice von ihrem Mann immer zwischen 2 und 3 Uhr nachmittags frei ist. Um seinen Appetit weiter anzuregen, fügt sie hinzu, dass Meg Page ebenso von ihm betört wäre. Bei ihrem Abtritt frohlockt Falstaff mit einem triumphierenden Monolog: Alter hat weder seiner Anziehungskraft noch seiner Geschicklichkeit Abbruch getan („Va, vecchio John“).

Bardolph und Pistol stellen nun „Signor Fontana“ vor, der zur Beeinflussung Falstaffs ausgerüstet mit Wein und einer heftigen Brieftasche hierher kam. „Fontana“ bittet um Hilfe bei seiner Verführung von Alice Ford, die ihn zurückgewiesen habe. Wenn Sie

sich zuerst Falstaff hingeben würde, hätte er vielleicht eine bessere Chance. Falstaff erzählt ihm, er habe ein Stelldichein just an diesem Nachmittag und würde bald ihrem dummen Mann die Hörner aufsetzen. Allein gelassen, während sich Falstaff in Schale wirft, lässt Ford seiner eifersüchtigen Wut freien Lauf („È sogno? O realtà?“), wobei er schwört, das schuldige Paar zu entlarven und zu strafen.

Fords Haus

Mrs. Quickly berichtet Alice und Meg vom Erfolg ihrer Mission. Nannetta tritt weinend auf. Ihr Vater hat ihr befohlen, Dr. Cajus zu heiraten. Aber Alice versichert ihr, dass dies nicht geschehen wird, und bereitet dann die Szene für Falstaffs Bloßstellung vor. Die wichtigsten Requisiten sind ein Wandschirm und ein Korb mit dreckiger Wäsche. Falstaff tritt auf und macht Alice mit übertriebener Höflichkeit den Hof, und wenn sie auf seinen Umfang aufmerksam macht, erinnert er sich in einer köstlichen Arietta („Quand'ero paggio del Duca di Norfolk“), dass er einmal so schlank wie eine Bohnenstange gewesen war. Mrs. Quickly meldet Meg, die Alice „warnt“, dass ihr Mann mit mörderischen Absichten im Anzug sei. Panisch kehrt Mrs. Quickly mit der Nachricht zurück, dass er tatsächlich kommt. Falstaff wird im Waschkorb versteckt. Während Ford sein Haus auf den Kopf stellt, finden Nannetta und Fenton zum Knuddeln ein ruhiges Eckchen hinter dem Wandschirm. Das Geräusch eines Kusses überzeugt Ford, das sich hier seine Frau und Falstaff befinden. Im Durcheinander der Entdeckung von Nannetta und Fenton befiehlt Alice ihren Dienern, den Waschkorb in die Themse zu entleeren und zwingt ihren Mann, das Ausmaß seiner Torheit anzuerkennen.

Akt III

Draußen vor dem Gasthaus „Zum Hosenbände“ In einem ausgezeichneten Monolog („Mondo ladro“) beklagt sich ein vor Nässe triefende Falstaff über den Zustand der Welt. Die alten Werte bedeuten immer weniger, Tugend gibt es nicht mehr, nur seine Wampe hat ihn vor dem Ertrinken bewahrt. Aber ein Glas Glühwein erweckt seine Lebensgeister wieder. Mrs. Quickly überbringt eine Nachricht von Alice, die ein weiteres Stelldichein vorschlägt, diesmal im Park von Windsor bei der Eiche des Hernes. Falstaff soll sich als Jäger Herne verkleiden. Die beiden ziehen sich in das Gasthaus zurück, und Alice, Meg und Ford treten auf, um die Requisiten für die abendliche Maskerade zu verteilen. Bei Ihrem Abtritt überhört Mrs. Quickly, wie Ford beabsichtigt, die Gelegenheit zu nutzen, um Nannetta mit Dr. Cajus zu vermählen, der sich als Mönch verkleiden soll.

Der Park von Windsor

Fenton singt von seiner Liebe („Dal labbro il canto“). Alice gibt ihm eine Mönchstracht. Falstaff trägt bei seinem Auftritt das Hirschgeweih des der Legende nach herumgeisternden Jägers Herne.

Ein Geplänkel mit sowohl Alice und Meg wird vom Lied der Feenkönigin unterbrochen - Nannettas Rolle („Sul fil d'un soffio“) - und Falstaff weiß, dass jeder, der Unsterbliche zu Gesicht bekommt, sterben muss. Er versucht sein Gesicht zu verstecken, aber die ganze Feenmeute misshandelt ihn, bis er in einem der Kobolde Bardolph erkennt. Er erkennt auch „Signor Fontana“, und alles klärt sich auf. Er akzeptiert seine Verulkung mit gutem Humor: Ohne ihn wäre die Welt ein langweiliger Ort. Ford „vermählt“ sowohl Cajus

und Nannetta und ein weiteres Paar, das zufällig vorbei kam, nämlich Fenton und die richtige Nannetta. Cajus ist verärgert, als er entdeckt, dass er mit Bardolph getraut wurde. Falstaff erklärt Ford, dass er nicht der einzige geprellt Mann ist. Dann führt er die Gesellschaft in eine frohgemute Fuge: „Tutto nel mondo è burla“ - „Alles auf Erden ist nur ein Spaß ... wer zu letzt lacht, lacht am besten“.

Handlung © Rodney Milnes

Rodney Milnes hat ein Leben lang über Opern geschrieben und im Radio berichtet. In jüngster Zeit war er der Hauptrezensent für Opern der Times (1992-2002) und von 1986-1999 Redakteur der Zeitschrift Opera.

Übersetzung aus dem Englischen: Elke Hockings



Bülent Bezdüz, Maria José Moreno and Jane Henschel during rehearsals for Falstaff, May 2004

LIBRETTO

by Arrigo Boito
This libretto was originally printed by the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London and has been reproduced with their kind permission.

CD1

ATTO PRIMO, parte prima

L'INTERNO DELL'OSTERIA DELLA GIARRETTIERA.

Una tavola. Un gran seggiolone. Una panca. Sulla tavola i resti d'un desinare, parecchie bottiglie e un bicchiere. Calamaio, penne, carta, una candela accesa. Una scopa appoggiata al muro. Uscio nel fondo, porta a sinistra.

Falstaff è occupato a riscaldare la cera di due lettere alla fiamma della candela, poi le suggella con un anello. Dopo averle suggellate spegne il lume e si mette a bere comodamente sdraiato sul seggiolone.)

¹ DR CAJUS (entrando dalla porta a sinistra e gridando minaccioso) Falstaff!

FALSTAFF (senza abbadare alle vociferazioni del Dr Cajus, chiama l'Oste, che si avvicina) Olà!

DR CAJUS (più forte di prima) Sir John Falstaff!!

BARDOLFO (al Dottore) Oh! che vi piglia?!

DR CAJUS (sempre vociando e avvicinandosi a Falstaff che non gli dà retta) Hai battuto i miei servi! ...

FALSTAFF (all'Oste, che esce per eseguir l'ordine) Oste! un'altra bottiglia Di Xeres.

DR CAJUS (come sopra) Hai fiaccata la mia giumenta baia Sforzata la mia casa.

FALSTAFF Ma non la tua massaia.

DR CAJUS Troppa grazia! Una vecchia cisposa. Ampio Messere.

LIBRETTO

by Arrigo Boito
© Gwynn Morris

CD1

ACT I, Part one

INSIDE THE GARTER INN.

A table. A large armchair. A bench. On the table are the remains of a morning meal, several bottles and a glass. An inkwell, pens, paper, a lighted candle. A broom leaning against the wall. A door is at the rear, another one on the left.

(Falstaff is busy heating the wax for two letters in the flame from the candle, then he seals them with a ring. Having done this, he puts out the light and begins to drink, comfortably stretched out in the armchair.)

DR CAIUS (entering by the door on the left, with a threatening shout) Falstaff!

FALSTAFF (paying no attention to Dr Caius's shout, calling the innkeeper, who approaches) Ho there!

DR CAIUS (louder than before) Sir John Falstaff!!

BARDOLPH (to Dr Caius) Oh! what's the matter with you?!

DR CAIUS (still shouting, and approaching Falstaff, who pays no attention to him) You've thrashed my servants! ...

FALSTAFF (to the innkeeper, who goes out to fetch his order) Innkeeper! another bottle Of sherry.

DR CAIUS (as before) You've worn out my bay mare, broken into my house.

FALSTAFF But spared your housekeeper.

DR CAIUS Thanks for nothing! A bleary-eyed old hag. My stout Sir.

Se foste venti volte John Falstaff Cavaliere Vi forzerò a rispondermi.

FALSTAFF (con flemma) Ecco la mia risposta: Ho fatto ciò che hai detto.

DR CAJUS E poi?

FALSTAFF L'ho fatto apposta.

DR CAJUS (gridando) M'appellerò al Consiglio Real.

FALSTAFF Vatti con Dio. Sta zitto o avrai le beffe; quest'è il consiglio mio.

DR CAJUS (ripigliando la sfuriata contro Bardolfo) Non è finita!!

FALSTAFF Al diavolo!

DR CAJUS Bardolfo!

BARDOLFO Ser Dottore.

DR CAJUS (sempre con tono minaccioso) Tu, ier, m'hai fatto bere.

BARDOLFO (si fa tastare il polso dal Dr Cajus) Pur troppo! e che dolore! ... Sto mal. D'un tuo pronostico m'assisti. Ho l'intestino guasto. Malanno agli osti che dan la calce al vino! (mettendo l'indice sul proprio naso enorme e rubicondo) Vedi questa meteor?

DR CAJUS La vedo.

BARDOLFO Essa sì corca Rossa così ogni notte.

DR CAJUS (scoppiando) Pronostico di forca! M'hai fatto ber, furfante, con lui, narrando frasche; (indicando Pistola) Poi, quando fui ben ciùscherò, m'hai vuotate le tasche.

BARDOLFO (con decoro) Non io.

DR CAJUS Chi fu?

FALSTAFF (chiamando) Pistola!

PISTOLA (avanzandosi) Padrone.

FALSTAFF (sempre seduto sul seggiolone e con flemma) Hai tu vuotate Le tasche a quel Messere?

DR CAJUS (scattando contro Pistola) Certo fu lui. Guardate Come s'atteggia al niego quel ceffo da bugiardo! (vuotando una tasca della giubba)

If you were twenty times Sir John Falstaff I'd force you to answer me.

FALSTAFF (calmly) Here's my answer: I've done what you said.

DR CAIUS So then?

FALSTAFF I did it on purpose.

DR CAIUS (yelling) I'll appeal to the Royal Council.

FALSTAFF Go with God. Be quiet or you'll be mocked; that's my advice.

DR CAIUS (turning to attack Bardolph) I've not done yet!!

FALSTAFF Go to the devil!

DR CAIUS Bardolph!

BARDOLPH Doctor, sir.

DR CAIUS (still threateningly) Yesterday, you got me drunk.

BARDOLPH (getting Dr Caius to feel his pulse) Sadly, yes! and how I've suffered! ... I feel sick. Help me with one of your prescriptions. My guts are upset. A plague on those innkeepers who put lime in their wine! (putting his finger on his own enormous purple nose) Do you see this meteor?

DR CAIUS I see it.

BARDOLPH It retires every night As red as this.

DR CAIUS (exploding) A prescription for the gallows! You made me drunk, you rogue, with him, talking nonsense; (pointing to Pistol) Then, when I was quite fuddled, you emptied my pockets.

BARDOLPH (with dignity) Not I.

DR CAIUS Then who was it?

FALSTAFF (calling) Pistol!

PISTOLA (coming forward) Master.

FALSTAFF (calmly, still seated in the armchair) Did you empty This gentleman's pockets?

DR CAIUS (attacking Pistol) Of course he did. Look At that liar's ugly mug ready to deny it! (turning out a pocket of his doublet)

Qui c'eran due scellini del regno d'Edoardo
E sei mezze-corone. Non ne riman più segno.

PISTOLA (a Falstaff dignitosamente brandendo la scopa)
Padron, chiedo di battermi con quest'arma di legno.
(al Dottore con forza) Vi smentisco!

DR CAJUS Bifolco! tu parli a un gentiluomo!

PISTOLA Gonzo!

DR CAJUS Pezzente!

PISTOLA Bestia!

DR CAJUS Can!

PISTOLA Vill!

DR CAJUS Spauracchio!

PISTOLA Gnomol!

DR CAJUS Germoglio di mandrâgora!

PISTOLA Chi?

DR CAJUS Tu.

PISTOLA Ripeti!

DR CAJUS Sì.

PISTOLA (scagliandosi contro il Dottore) Saette!!!

FALSTAFF (con un cenno frena Pistola)
Ehi là! Pistola! Non scaricarti qui.
(chiamando Bardolfo, che s'avvicina)
Bardolfo! Chi ha vuotate le tasche a quel Messere?

DR CAJUS (subito) Fu l'un dei due.

BARDOLFO (con serenità indicando il Dr Cajus)
Costui beve, poi pel gran bere
Perde i suoi cinque sensi, poi ti narra una favola
Ch'egli ha sognato mentre dormi sotto la tavola.

FALSTAFF (al Dr Cajus)
L'odi? Se ti capaci, del ver
tu sei sicuro.
I fatti son negati. Vattene in pace.

DR CAJUS Giuro
Che se mai m'ubbrico ancora all'osteria
Sarà fra gente onesta, sobria, civile e pia.
(Esce)

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA (accompagnando buffonescamente
sino all'uscio il Dr Cajus e salmodiando) Amen.

Here there were two shillings from King Edward's reign
And six half-crowns. There's no sign of them left.

PISTOL (to Falstaff, brandishing a broom with dignity)
Master, I beg leave to fight him with this wooden weapon.
(forcefully to Dr Caius) I deny it!

DR CAIUS You peasant! you're talking to a gentleman!

PISTOL You fool!

DR CAIUS Beggar!

PISTOL Beast!

DR CAIUS Dog!

PISTOL Coward!

DR CAIUS Scarecrow!

PISTOL Gnome!

DR CAIUS Mandrake sprout!

PISTOL Who?

DR CAIUS You.

PISTOL Repeat it!

DR CAIUS Yes.

PISTOL (threatening the Doctor) By thunder!!!

FALSTAFF (with a gesture, restraining Pistol)
Ho there! Pistol! Don't go off here.
(calling Bardolph, who approaches)
Bardolph! Who picked this gentleman's pockets?

DR CAIUS (at once) It was one of the two.

BARDOLPH (calmly pointing to Dr Caius)
This man drinks, then with all the drinking
He loses his five senses, then spins you a tale
That he dreamt up while asleep under the table.

FALSTAFF (to Dr Caius)
You hear that? If you understand him, you can be
sure of the truth.
The facts are denied. Go in peace.

DR CAIUS I swear
That if ever I get drunk again at the inn
It will be with honest, sober, civilized, godly people.
(He leaves)

BARDOLPH, PISTOL (clownishly accompanying Dr Caius
to the door and chanting) Amen.

FALSTAFF

Cessi l'antifona. La urlate in contrattempo.
(Bardolfo e Pistola smettono e si avvicinano a Falstaff.)
L'arte sta in questa massima: «Rubar con garbo e a tempore».
Siete dei rozzi artisti.
(Si mette ad esaminare il conto che l'Oste avrà portato insieme
alla bottiglia di Xeres.)

2

6 polli: 6 scellini.
30 giarre di Xeres: 2 lire. 3 tacchini ...
(a Bardolfo gettandogli la borsa e si rimette a leggere
lentamente)
Fruga nella mia borsa. – 2 fagiani. Un'acciuga.

BARDOLFO (estrae dalla borsa le monete e le conta
sul tavolo) Un mark, un mark, un penny.

FALSTAFF Fruga.

BARDOLFO Ho frugato.

FALSTAFF Fruga!

BARDOLFO (gettando la borsa sul tavolo)
Qui non c'è più uno spicciolo.

FALSTAFF (alzandosi) Sei la mia distruzione!
Spendo ogni sette giorni dieci ghinee! Beone!
So che se andiam, la notte, di taverna in taverna
Quel tuo naso ardentissimo mi serve da lanterna;
Ma quel risparmio d'olio tu lo consumi in vino.
Son trent'anni che abbevero quel fungo porporino!
Costi troppo.
(a Pistola, poi all'Oste che sarà rimasto ed esce)
E tu pure. – Oste! un'altra bottiglia.
(rivolto ancora a Bardolfo e Pistola)
Mi struggete le carni! Se Falstaff s'assottiglia
Non è più lui, nessun più l'ama;
In quest'addome
C'è un migliaio di lingue che annunciano il mio nome!

BARDOLFO (acclamando) Falstaff immenso!

PISTOLA (come sopra) Enorme Falstaff!

FALSTAFF (toccandosi e guardandosi l'addome)
Quest'è il mio regno.
Lo ingrandirò. – Ma è tempo d'assottigliar l'ingegno.

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA Assottigliam.
(Tutti e tre in crocchio.)

FALSTAFF

Stop this antiphony. You're bawling it out of time.
(Bardolph and Pistol stop and approach Falstaff.)
Art lies in this maxim: 'Steal gracefully and at the right moment'.
You are clumsy artists.
(He begins to examine the bill, which the innkeeper has
brought with the bottle of sherry.)
six chickens: six shillings.
thirty flagons of sherry: two pounds. three turkeys ...
(to Bardolph, throwing him his purse and carrying on reading
slowly)
Rummage in my purse. – two pheasants. An anchovy.

BARDOLPH (taking money from the purse and counting it
out on the table) One mark, one mark, one penny.

FALSTAFF Search.

BARDOLPH I have searched.

FALSTAFF Search!

BARDOLPH (throwing the purse on the table)
There's not a farthing more here.

FALSTAFF (rising) You are the ruin of me!
I'm spending ten guineas a week! You toper!
I know that if at night we go from tavern to tavern
That fiery-red nose of yours serves me as a lantern;
But what I save in lamp-oil you soak up in wine.
I've been watering that purple mushroom for thirty years!
You cost too much.
(to Pistol, then to the innkeeper, who is still there,
and then goes out)
And so do you. – Mine host! another bottle.
(turning again to Bardolph and Pistol)
You are destroying my very flesh! If Falstaff becomes thinner
He'll no longer be himself, no-one will love him any more;
in this abdomen
There are a thousand tongues proclaiming my name!

BARDOLPH (praising him) Immense Falstaff!

PISTOL (likewise) Enormous Falstaff!

FALSTAFF (patting and looking at his paunch)
This is my kingdom.
I intend to increase it. – But it is time to sharpen our wits.

BARDOLPH, PISTOL Let's sharpen them.
(All three in a group.)

FALSTAFF V'è noto un tal, qui del paese
Che ha nome Ford?

BARDOLFO Sì.

PISTOLA Sì.

FALSTAFF Quell'uom è un gran borghese ...

PISTOLA Più liberal d'un Creso.

BARDOLFO È un Lord!

FALSTAFF Sua moglie è bella.

PISTOLA E tien lo scrigno.

FALSTAFF È quella! O amor! Sguardo di stella!
Collo di cigno! e il labbro? un fior.
Un fior che ride.

Alice è il nome, e un giorno come passar mi vide
Ne' suoi paraggi, rise. M'ardea l'estro amatorio
Nel cor. La Dea vibrava raggi di
specchio istorio
(pavoneggiandosi)
Su me, su me, sul fianco baldo, sul gran torace,
Sul maschio piè, sul fusto saldo, erto, capace;
E il suo desir in lei fulgea sì al mio congiunto
Che pareva dir: «Io son di Sir John Falstaff».

BARDOLFO Punto.

FALSTAFF (continuando la parola di Pistola)
E a capo. – Un'altra;
e questa ha nome: Margherita.

PISTOLA La chiaman Meg.

FALSTAFF È anch'essa de' miei pregi invaghita.
E anch'essa tien le chiavi ...

FALSTAFF, BARDOLFO, PISTOLA ...dello scrigno.

FALSTAFF Costoro
Saran le mie Golconde e le mie Coste d'oro!
Guardate. Io sono ancora una piacente estate
Di San Martino. A voi, due lettere infuocate.
(dà a Bardolfo una delle due lettere che sono rimaste sul tavolo)
Tu porta questa a Meg; tentiam la sua virtù.
(Bardolfo prende la lettera.)
Già vedo che il tuo naso arde di zelo.
(dà a Pistola l'altra lettera)
E tu
Porta questa ad Alice.

FALSTAFF Do you know a certain man
Whose name is Ford?

BARDOLPH Yes.

PISTOL Yes.

FALSTAFF That man is a wealthy burgher ...

PISTOL More generous than Croesus.

BARDOLPH He's a Lord!

FALSTAFF His wife is beautiful.

PISTOL And she keeps the key of the strongbox.

FALSTAFF That's the one! Oh love! Eyes like stars!
The neck of a swan! and her mouth? a flower.
A smiling flower.
Alice is her name, and one day, as she saw me passing
In her vicinity, she laughed. Love's ardour flamed
In my heart. The goddess shot rays as if through
a burning glass
(preening himself)
Upon me, upon me, on my bold flank, on my broad chest,
My manly foot, my strong, erect, capable frame;
And her desire so flared in her as we met
That she seemed to be saying: 'I am Sir John Falstaff's'.

BARDOLPH Full stop.

FALSTAFF (continuing to speak to Pistol)
And we start again. – There's another lady;
and this one is called: Margaret.

PISTOL They call her Meg.

FALSTAFF She too is fascinated by my charms.
And she too keeps the keys ...

FALSTAFF, BARDOLPH, PISTOL ... of the strongbox.

FALSTAFF Those two
Shall be my Golconda and my Gold Coast!
Behold me. I am still a pleasant summer
Of St Martin. To you, two red-hot letters.
(giving Bardolph one of the two letters which have been lying
on the table) You take this to Meg; let us test her virtue.
(Bardolph takes the letter.)
Already I see your nose burning with zeal.
(giving Pistol the other letter)
And you
Take this one to Alice.

PISTOLA (ricusando con dignità)
Porto una spada al fianco.
Non sono un Messer Pandarus. Ricuso.

FALSTAFF (con calma sprezzante) Saltimbanco.

BARDOLFO (avanzandosi e gettando la lettera sul tavolo)
[3] Sir John, in quest'intrigo non posso accondiscendervi,
Lo vieta ...

FALSTAFF (interrompendolo) Chi?

BARDOLFO L'Onore.

FALSTAFF
(vedendo il paggio Robin che entra dal fondo)
Ehil! paggio!
(poi subito a Bardolfo e Pistola)
Andate a impendervi,
Ma non più a me!
(al paggio che escirà correndo colle lettere)
Due lettere, prendi, per due signore.
Consegna tosto, corri, via, lesto, val –
(rivolto a Pistola e Bardolfo)
L'Onore!
Ladri! Voi state ligi all'onor vostro, voi!
Cloache d'ignominia, quando, non sempre, noi
Possiam star ligi al nostro. Io stesso, sì, io, io,
Devo talor da un lato porre il timor di Dio
E, per necessità, sviar l'onore e usare
Stratagemmi ed equivoci, destreggiar, bordeggiare.
E voi, coi vostri cenci e coll'occhiata tórta
Da gatto-pardo e i fettei sghignazzi avete a scorta
Il vostro Onor! Che onore?! che onor? che onor!
che ciancia!
Che baia! – Può l'onore riempirvi la pancia?
No. – Può l'onor rimettervi uno stinco? –
Non può.
Nè un piede? – No. – Nè un dito? – No. –
Nè un capello? – No.
L'onor non è chirurgo. – Che è dunque? – Una parola.
Che c'è in questa parola? – C'è dell'aria che vola.
Bel costrutto! – L'onore lo può sentir chi è morto?
No. – Vive sol coi vivi?... Neppure: perchè a torto
Lo gonfian le lusinghe, lo corrompe l'orgoglio,
L'ammorban le calunnie; e per me non ne voglio!
Ma, per tornare a voi, furfanti, ho atteso troppo,
E vi discaccio.
(Prende in mano la scopa e insegue Bardolfo e Pistola.)

PISTOL (refusing with assumed dignity)
I wear a sword at my side.
I am no Sir Pandarus. I refuse.

FALSTAFF (with calm scorn) You mountebank.

BARDOLPH (advancing and throwing the letter on to the table)
Sir John, I cannot oblige you in this intrigue,
It is forbidden ...

FALSTAFF (interrupting) By whom?

BARDOLPH Honour.

FALSTAFF
(spotting the page-boy Robin who has entered at the rear)
Ho there! page!
(Ho suddenly to Bardolph and Pistol)
Go and hang yourselves,
But no longer on me!
(to the page who runs out with the letters)
Two letters, for two ladies, take them,
Deliver them quickly, run, away with you, look sharp, go! –
(turning back to Pistol and Bardolph)
Honour!
You thieves! You're loyal to your honour, you!
You sewers of shame, when we cannot always be true
To our own. I myself, yes, I, I,
Must sometimes put aside the fear of God
And, of necessity shunning honour,
Make use of stratagems and trickery, artfully manoeuvring.
And you, in your rags and with your sly looks
Of a tiger-cat and your foul guffaws, consort
With Honour! What honour?! what honour? what honour!
what nonsense!
What rubbish! – Can honour fill your paunch?
No. – Can honour set a broken shin? –
It cannot.
Or a foot? – No. – Or a finger? – No. –
Or a hair of your head? – No.
Honour is no surgeon. – What is it then? – A word.
What is there in this word? – Just air that floats away.
What use is that! – Can a dead man feel honour?
No. – Does it live only with the living?... Not at all: for flattery
Wrongfully inflates it, pride corrupts it,
Calumny pollutes it; and as for me, I'll have none of it!
But, to return to you, you scoundrels, I've waited too long,
So now I'm driving you out.
(He seizes the broom and chases Bardolph and Pistol.)

Oià! Lesti! Lesti! al galoppo!
Al galoppo! Il capestro assai bene vi sta.
Ladri! Via! Via di qua! Via di qua! Via di qua!

(Bardolfo fugge dalla porta a sinistra, Pistola fugge dall'uscio del fondo non senza essersi buscato qualche colpo di granata, e Falstaff lo insegue.)

ATTO PRIMO, parte seconda

GIARDINO.

A sinistra la casa di Ford. Gruppi d'alberi nel centro della scena.

(Meg con Mrs Quickly da destra. S'avviano verso la casa di Ford, e sulla soglia s'imbattono in Alice e Nannetta che stanno per uscire.)

4 **MEG** (saluta) Alice.

ALICE (come sopra) Meg.

MEG (salutando) Nannetta.

ALICE (a Meg) Escivo appunto
Per ridere con te.
(a Quickly) Buon dì, comare.

QUICKLY Dio vi doni allegria.
(accarezzando la guancia di Nannetta) Botton di rosa!

ALICE (ancora a Meg) Giungi a buon punto.
M'accade un fatto da trasecolare.

MEG Anche a me.

QUICKLY (che parlava con Nannetta, avvicinandosi con curiosità)
Che?

NANNETTA (avvicinandosi) Che cosa?

ALICE (a Meg) Narra il tuo caso.

MEG Narra il tuo.

ALICE (in crocchio) Promessa
Di non ciarlare.

MEG Ti pare?!

QUICKLY Oibò! Vi pare?!

Ho there! Look lively! Look lively! at the gallop!
At the gallop! The halter will suit you well.
Thieves! Get out! Get out of here! Get out of here!

(Bardolph flees through the door on the left, Pistol through the rear door, but not without catching some blows, and Falstaff follows him.)

ACT I, Part two

A GARDEN.

On the left, Ford's house. Groups of trees in the centre of the stage.

(Meg and Mistress Quickly from the right. They make their way towards Ford's house, and on the threshold meet Alice and Nannetta who are coming out.)

MEG (greeting her) Alice.

ALICE (as above) Meg.

MEG (greeting her) Nannetta.

ALICE (to Meg) I was just coming out
To have a laugh with you.
(to Quickly) Good day, Mistress.

QUICKLY God give you good cheer.
(stroking Nannetta's cheek) Rosebud!

ALICE (still to Meg) You've come at the right moment.
Something's happened to me that will astound you.

MEG And to me too.

QUICKLY (who was talking to Nannetta, approaching curiously)
What is it?

NANNETTA (approaching) What's to do?

ALICE (to Meg) Tell us your story.

MEG You tell yours.

ALICE (in a group) Promise
Not to gossip.

MEG Of course not?!

QUICKLY Fie! As if I would?!

ALICE Dunque: se m'acconciassi a entrar ne' rei
Propositi del diavolo, sarei
Promossa al grado di Cavalleressa!

MEG Anch'io.

ALICE Motteggi.

MEG (cerca in tasca: estrae una lettera)
Non più parole
Chè qui sciupiamo la luce del sole.
Ho una lettera.

ALICE (cerca in tasca) Anch'io.

NANNETTA, QUICKLY Oh!!

ALICE (dà la lettera a Meg) Leggi.

5 **MEG** (scambia la propria lettera con quella di Alice) Leggi.
(leggendo la lettera d'Alice) «Fulgida Alice! amor t'offro»
... Ma come?!
Che cosa dice?
Salvo che il nome
La frase è uguale.

ALICE (coglie occhi sulla lettera che tiene in mano, ripete la lettura di Meg)
«Fulgida Meg! amor t'offro...»

MEG (continuando sul proprio foglio la lettera d'Alice)
«amor bramo.»

ALICE Qua «Meg», là «Alice».

MEG È tal e quale.
(come sopra) «Non domandar perché, ma dimmi:»

ALICE (come sopra) «t'amo.»
Pur non gli offersi
Cagion.

MEG Il nostro
Caso è pur strano.

(Tutte in un gruppo addosso alle lettere, confrontandole e maneggiandole con curiosità.)

QUICKLY Guardiam con flemma.

MEG Gli stessi versi.

ALICE Lo stesso inchiestro.

QUICKLY La stessa mano.

NANNETTA Lo stesso stemma.

ALICE Well then: if I took it into my head to yield
To the wicked temptations of the devil, I'd
Be promoted to the rank of a knight's favourite!

MEG So should I.

ALICE You're jesting.

MEG (searching in her pocket: taking out a letter)
No more chatter
For here we're just wasting the daylight.
I have a letter.

ALICE (searching in her pocket) So have I.

NANNETTA, QUICKLY Oh!!

ALICE (giving her letter to Meg) Read this.

MEG (exchanging her letter for Alice's) Read this.
(reading Alice's letter) 'Radiant Alice! I offer you love'
... But what's this?!
What's he saying?
Apart from the name
The words are the same.

ALICE (with her eyes on the letter she holds in her hand, reading the letter addressed to Meg)
'Radiant Meg! I offer you love...'

MEG (continuing, with her own page of the letter to Alice)
'love I yearn for.'

ALICE Here 'Meg', there 'Alice'.

MEG It's just the same.
(as before) 'Don't ask me why, but say to me:'

ALICE (as before) 'I love you.'
Yet I never gave him
Cause.

MEG We're in
Quite a strange situation.

(All in a group peering at the letters, comparing them and handing them round with curiosity.)

QUICKLY Let's study it calmly.

MEG The same verses.

ALICE The same ink.

QUICKLY The same handwriting.

NANNETTA The same coat-of-arms.

ALICE, MEG (*flegendo insieme ciascuna sulla propria lettera*)
«Sei la gaia comare, il compar gaio
Son io, e fra noi due facciamo il paio.»

ALICE Già.

NANNETTA Lui, lei, te.

QUICKLY Un paio in tre.

ALICE «Facciamo il paio in un amor ridente
(*tutte col naso sulle lettere*)
Di donna bella e d'uomo»

TUTTE «appariscente»

ALICE «E il viso tuo su me risplenderà
Come una stella sull'immensità.»

TUTTE (*ridendo*) Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

ALICE (*continua e finisce*) «Rispondi al tuo sciudiere,
John Falstaff Cavaliere.»

6 **TUTTE** Mostro!

ALICE Dobbiam gabbarlo.

NANNETTA E farne chiasso.

ALICE E metterlo in burletta.

NANNETTA Oh! Oh! che spasso!

QUICKLY Che allegria!

MEG Che vendetta!

ALICE
(*rivolgendosi o all'una ora all'altra, tutte in crocchio cinguettando*)
Quell'otre! quel tino!
Quel Re delle pance,
Ci ha ancora le ciance
Del bel vagheggino.
E l'olio gli sgocciola
Dall'adipe unticcio
E ancor ei ne snocciola
La strofa e il bisticcio!
Lasciam ch'ei le pronte
Sue ciarle ne spifferi,
Farà come i pifferi
Che sceser dal monte.
Vedrai che se abbindolo
Quel grosso compar
Più lesto d'un guindolo
Lo faccio girar

ALICE, MEG (*together, each reading from her own letter*)
'You are the merry wife, I the merry partner,
And between us we make a pair.'

ALICE Aye.

NANNETTA He, she, you.

QUICKLY Three making a pair.

ALICE 'Let's make a pair in a joyful love
(*all studying the letters closely*)
Of a lovely lady and a man'

THE OTHERS 'of a striking character'

ALICE 'And your face will shine upon me
Like a star over immense space.'

ALL (*laughing*) Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

ALICE (*concluding*) 'Reply to your esquire,
John Falstaff, knight.'

ALL Monster!

ALICE We must dupe him.

NANNETTA And make a stir about it.

ALICE And make a fool of him.

NANNETTA Oh! Oh! what fun!

QUICKLY What merriment!

MEG What a revenge!

ALICE
(*turning from one to another, all chattering in a group*)
That wine-skin! that vat!
That king of paunches,
He still boasts
Of being a handsome young gallant.
And oil drips out of
His greasy, fat hide
And he's still rattling off
Stanzas and verses!
Let's let him get ready
With his tittle-tattle,
He'll do it like the pipers
Coming down from the mountain.
You'll see that if I trick
That stout character
I'll make him spin round
Faster than a spool.

MEG (*ad Alice*)
Quell'uom è un cannone!
Se scoppia, ci spaccia.
Colui, se l'abbraccia,
Ti schiaccia Giunone.
Ma certo si spappola
Quel mostro a un tuo cenno
E corre alla trappola
E perde il suo senno.
Potenza d'un fragile
Sorriso di donna!
Scienza d'un agile
Movenza di gonnal
Se il vischio lo impiegola
Lo udremo strillar.
E allor la sua fregola
Vedremo svampar.

NANNETTA (*ad Alice*)
Se ordisci una burla,
Vo' anch'io la mia parte.
Convien condurla
Con senno e con arte.
L'agguato ov'ei sdrucciola
Convien ch'ei non scerna.
Già prese una lucciola
Per una lanterna.
Che il gioco riesca
Perciò più non dubito.
Per coglierlo subito,
Bisogna offrir l'esca.
E se i scilinguagnoli
Sapremo adoprar,
Vedremo a rigagnoli
Quell'orco sudar.

QUICKLY (*ora ad Alice, ora a Nannetta, ora a Meg*)
Un flutto in tempesta
Has cast up
On the banks of Windsor
This ravenous whale.
But there's no room here
For him to grow any fatter
Your three tongues
Have already rent him apart.
Three tongues brighter
Than the snap of castanets,
Chattering more

MEG (*to Alice*)
That man is a cannon!
If he explodes, we're done for.
That man, if he were to embrace her,
Would crush Juno herself.
But surely, at a hint from you,
That monster will cave in
And run into the trap
And lose his mind.
What power is there
In a frail woman's smile!
What skill in
A deft movement of the skirt!
If the bird-lime smears him
We'll hear him yell.
And then we'll see his lust
Soon cool off.

NANNETTA (*to Alice*)
If you're plotting a prank,
I want to play my part too.
It must be carried out
Sensibly and artfully.
He mustn't spot the ambush
Into which he is slipping.
He's already taken one thing
For another.
I don't doubt
That our game will succeed.
To catch him quickly,
We must offer him bait.
And if we know how
To keep our tongues still,
We'll see that ogre
Sweating streams.

QUICKLY (*now to Alice, now to Nannetta, now to Meg*)
A stormy wave
Has cast up
On the banks of Windsor
This ravenous whale.
But there's no room here
For him to grow any fatter
Your three tongues
Have already rent him apart.
Three tongues brighter
Than the snap of castanets,
Chattering more

Di sei cingallegre.
Tal sempre s'esilari
Quel bel cinguettar;
Così soglion l'illari
Comari ciarlàr.
(S'allontanano.)

(Mr Ford, Dr Caius, Fenton, Bardolfo, Pistola entrano da destra, mentre le donne escono da sinistra. Ford nel centro, Pistola al suo fianco destro, Bardolfo al suo fianco sinistro, Fenton e il Dr Caius dietro Ford. Tutti in gruppo, parlando a Ford a bassa voce, e brontolando.)

DR CAIUS (a Ford)

È un ribaldo, un furbo, un ladro,
Un furfante, un turco, un vandalo;
L'altro di mandò a soqquadro
La mia casa e fu uno scandalo.
Se un processo oggi gl'intavolo
Sconterà le sue rapine.
Ma la sua più degna fine
Sia d'andare in man del diavolo.
E quei due che avete accanto
Gente son di sua tribù,
Non son due stinchi di santo
Nè son fiori di virtù.

BARDOLFO (a Ford)

Falstaff, sì, ripeto, giuro,
(Per mia bocca il ciel v'illumina)
Contro voi, John Falstaff rumina
Un progetto alquanto impuro.
Son uom d'arme e quell'infame
Più non vo' che v'impozangheri.
Non vorrei, no, escir dai gangheri
Dell'onor per un reame!
Messer Ford, l'uomo avisato
Non è salvo che a metà.
Tocca a voi d'ordin l'agguato
Che l'agguato storerà.

FORD (da sè, poi agli altri)

Un ronzio di vespe e d'avidi
Calabron brontolamento,
Un rombar di nemi gravidi
D'uragani è quel ch'io sento.
Il cerèbro un ebro allucina
Turbamento di paura
Ciò che intorno a me si buccina,

Than six tomfits.
May that pretty twittering
Always cheer us;
As the merry wives
Usually chatter away.
(They go off.)

(Ford, Dr Caius, Fenton, Bardolph and Pistol enter from the right while the women are going off to the left. Ford is at the centre, Pistol on his right, Bardolph on his left, Fenton and Dr Caius behind him. All in a group, they speak to Ford quietly, making their complaints.)

DR CAIUS (to Ford)

He's a rogue, a cheat, a thief,
A rascal, a Turk, a vandal;
The other day he turned my house
Upside-down and it was a scandal.
If I bring a suit against him today
He'll pay for his plundering.
But the most proper end for him
Would be to fall into the power of the devil.
And those two that you have at your side
Are persons of his ilk,
They are neither shin-bones of a saint
Nor flowers of virtue.

BARDOLPH (to Ford)

Yes, Falstaff, I repeat, I swear,
(Heaven informs you by my words)
John Falstaff is thinking up
A quite foul plan against you.
I'm a man of arms and no longer want
That scoundrel to drag you in the mire.
No, I would not leave the bounds
Of honour for a kingdom!
Master Ford, a man alerted
Is only half saved.
It is up to you to set the trap
That will foil his.

FORD (aside, then to the others)

What I hear is a buzzing of wasps
And the hum of greedy hornets,
A rolling of heavy thunderclouds
Of violent storms.
A drunken fit of fear
Blinds my brain
What is bruited around me,

È un susurro di congiura.
Parlan quattro ed uno ascolta,
Qual dei quattro ascolterò?
Se parlaste uno alla volta
Forse allor v'intenderò.

PISTOLA (a Ford)

Sir John Falstaff già v'appresta,
Messer Ford, un gran pericolo.
Già vi pende sulla testa
Qualche cosa a perpendicolo.
Messer Ford, fui già un armigero
Di quell'uom dall'ampia cute,
Or mi pento e mi morigero
Per ragioni di salute.
La minaccia or v'è scoperta,
Or v'è noto il ciurmador.
State all'erta, all'erta, all'erta!
Qui si tratta dell'onor.

FENTON (a Ford)

Se volete io non mi perito
Di ridurlo alla ragione
Colle brusche o colle buone,
E pagarlo al par del merito.
Mi dà core e mi solletica,
(E sarà una giostra gaia),
Di sfondar quella ventraia
Iperbolico-apoplettica.
Col consiglio o colla spada
Se lo trovo al tu per tu,
O lui va per la sua strada
O lo assegno a Belzebù.

FORD (a Pistola) Ripeti.

PISTOLA (a Ford)

7 in due parole:
L'enorme Falstaff vuole
Entrar nel vostro tetto,
Beccarvi la consorte,
Sfondar la cassa-forte
E sconquassarvi il letto.

DR CAIUS Caspita!

FORD Quanti guai!

BARDOLFO (a Ford) Già le scrisse un biglietto ...

PISTOLA (interrompendo) Ma quel messaggio abietto Ricusai.

Is the whispering of a plot.
Four talk and one listens,
Which of the four shall I heed?
If you spoke one at a time
Then maybe I could understand you.

PISTOL (to Ford)

Sir John Falstaff is preparing
A great danger for you.
Already something is hanging
Directly over your head.
Master Ford, I once was bodyguard
To that grossly fleshy man,
Now I've repented, mend my ways
For reasons of health.
Now the threat is clear to you,
Now you know who the cheat is.
Beware, beware, beware!
Your honour is at risk.

FENTON (to Ford)

If you wish I'll not hesitate
To make him see reason
With harsh or persuasive words,
And pay him out as he deserves.
It cheers and excites me,
(And it will be such a merry game),
To burst open that vast,
Apoplectic paunch.
With my advice or my sword
If I meet him face to face,
Either he'll go about his business
Or I'll pack him off to Beelzebub.

FORD (to Pistol) Tell me again.

PISTOL (to Ford)

In short:
The enormous Falstaff wants
To get under your roof,
Take your wife,
Break into your strongbox
And usurp your bed.

DR CAIUS Good heavens!

FORD How terrible!

BARDOLPH (to Ford) He's already written her a letter ...

PISTOL (interrupting) But I refused to take That vile message.

BARDOLFO Ricusai.

PISTOLA Badate a voi!

BARDOLFO Badate!

PISTOLA Falstaff le occhieggia tutte
Che siano belle o brutte
Pulzelle o maritate.

BARDOLFO La corona che adorna
D'Atteon l'irte chiome
Su voi già spunta.

FORD Come
Sarebbe a dir?

BARDOLFO Le corna.

FORD Brutta parola!

DR CAJUS Ha voglie
Voraci il Cavaliere.

FORD Sorveglierò la moglie.
Sorveglierò il messere.
(Rientrano da sinistra le quattro donne.)
Salvar vo' i beni miei
Dagli appetiti altrui.

FENTON *(vedendo Nannetta)* (È lei.)

NANNETTA *(vedendo Fenton)* (È lui.)

FORD *(vedendo Alice)* (È lei.)

ALICE *(vedendo Ford)* (È lui.)

DR CAJUS *(a Ford, indicando Alice)* (È lei.)

MEG *(ad Alice, indicando Ford)* (È lui.)

ALICE *(alle altre a bassa voce indicando Ford)*
(S'egli sapesse! ...)

NANNETTA (Guait!)

ALICE (Schiviamo i passi suoi.)

MEG (Ford è geloso?)

ALICE (Assai.)

QUICKLY (Zitto.)

ALICE (Badiamo a noi.)

(Alice, Meg e Quickly escono da sinistra. Resta Nannetta. – Ford, Dr Cajus, Bardolfo e Pistola escono da destra. Resta Fenton.)

BARDOLPH I refused too.

PISTOL Be on your guard!

BARDOLPH Take care!

PISTOL Falstaff makes eyes at all of them
Whether they be pretty or ugly
Single or married.

BARDOLPH The crown which adorned
Acteon's bristly locks
Is already appearing on you.

FORD What
Do you mean?

BARDOLPH Cuckold's horns.

FORD A horrible expression!

DR CAJUS The knight
Has greedy appetites.

FORD I'll keep my eye on my wife.
And watch out for the gentleman too.
(The four women re-enter.)
I'll save my property
From the appetites of others.

FENTON *(seeing Nannetta)* (It's she.)

NANNETTA *(seeing Fenton)* (It's he.)

FORD *(seeing Alice)* (It is she.)

ALICE *(seeing Ford)* (It is he.)

DR CAJUS *(to Ford, pointing to Alice)* (There she is.)

MEG *(to Alice, pointing to Ford)* (There he is.)

ALICE *(to the other women, in a low voice indicating Ford)*
(If he only knew! ...)

NANNETTA (Trouble!)

ALICE (Let's keep out of his way.)

MEG (Is Ford jealous?)

ALICE (Very much so.)

QUICKLY (Hush.)

ALICE (We must look after ourselves.)

(Alice, Meg and Quickly exit at the left, leaving Nannetta. – Ford, Dr Cajus, Bardolph and Pistol exit at the right, leaving Fenton.)

FENTON *(fra i cespugli verso Nannetta a bassa voce)*
[8] Pst, pst, Nannetta.

NANNETTA *(mettendo l'indice al labbro per cenno di silenzio)*
Ssss.

FENTON Vien qua.

NANNETTA *(guardando attorno con cautela)* Taci.
Che vuoi?

FENTON Due baci.

NANNETTA In fretta.

FENTON In fretta.
(Si baciano rapidamente.)

NANNETTA Labbra di foco!

FENTON Labbra di fiore! ...

NANNETTA Che il vago gioco
Sanno d'amore.

FENTON Che spargon ciarle,
Che mostran perle,
Belle a vederle,
Dolci a baciarle!
(tenta di abbracciarla)
Labbra leggiadre!

NANNETTA *(difendendosi e guardandosi attorno)*
Man malandrine!

FENTON Ciglia assassine!
Pupille ladre!
T'amo!

NANNETTA Imprudente.
(Fenton per baciarla ancora.) No.

FENTON Sì ... due baci.

NANNETTA *(si svincola)* Basta.

FENTON Mi piaci
Tanto!

NANNETTA Vien gente.

(Si allontanano l'una dall'altro mentre ritornano le donne.)

FENTON *(cantando allontanandosi)*
«Bocca baciata non perde ventura.»

NANNETTA *(continuando il canto di Fenton, avvicinandosi alle altre donne)* «Anzi rinnova come fa la luna.»

FENTON *(from the bushes, to Nannetta in a low voice)*
Pst, pst, Nannetta.

NANNETTA *(putting her finger to her lips to indicate silence)*
Sssh.

FENTON Come here.

NANNETTA *(looking around cautiously)* Be quiet.
What do you want?

FENTON Two kisses.

NANNETTA Then hurry.

FENTON Yes, quickly.
(They kiss hurriedly.)

NANNETTA Lips of fire!

FENTON Lips like blossoms! ...

NANNETTA Which know
The sweet game of love.

FENTON That scatter fond words,
That display pearls,
Lovely to see,
Sweet to kiss!
(trying to embrace her)
Pretty lips!

NANNETTA *(avoiding him and looking around)*
Naughty hands!

FENTON Murderous glances!
Roguish eyes!
I love you!

NANNETTA How rash you are.
(Fenton tries to kiss her again.) No.

FENTON Yes ... two kisses.

NANNETTA *(struggling free)* That's enough.

FENTON I love you
So much!

NANNETTA Someone's coming.

(They separate as the women return.)

FENTON *(singing as he leaves)*
‘The mouth that is kissed is never unlucky.’

NANNETTA *(continuing Fenton's song, and approaching the other women)* ‘Instead it revives like the moon.’

(Fenton si nasconde dietro gli alberi del fondo.)

ALICE Falstaff m'ha canzonato.

MEG Merita un gran castigo.

ALICE Se gli scrivessi un rigo? ...

NANNETTA *(riunendosi al crocchio con disinvoltura)*
Val meglio un'ambasciata.

ALICE Sì.

QUICKLY Sì.

ALICE *(a Quickly)* Da quel brigante
Tu andrai. Lo adeschi all'offa
D'un ritrovo galante
Con me.

QUICKLY Questa è gaglioffa!

NANNETTA Che bella burla!

ALICE Prima,
Per attirarlo a noi,
Lo lusinghiamo, e poi
Gliele cantiamo in rima.

QUICKLY Non merita riguardo.

ALICE È un bove.

MEG È un uomo senza
Federe.

ALICE È un monte di lardo.

MEG Non merita clemenza.

ALICE È un ghiotton che scialacqua

TUTTO il suo aver nel cuoco.

NANNETTA Lo tufferem nell'acqua.

ALICE Lo arrostitremo al fuoco.

NANNETTA Che gioia!

ALICE Che allegria!

MEG *(a Quickly)* Procaccia di far bene
La tua parte.

QUICKLY
(accorgendosi di Fenton che s'aggira nel fondo)
Chi viene?

MEG Là c'è qualcun che spia.

(Fenton hides behind the trees.)

ALICE Falstaff has been teasing me.

MEG He deserves to be punished severely.

ALICE What if I were to write him a line? ...

NANNETTA *(joining the group as though nothing had happened)* A messenger would be better.

ALICE Yes.

QUICKLY Yes.

ALICE *(to Quickly)* You will go
To that brigand. Offer him the bait
Of a secret rendezvous
With me.

QUICKLY This is diabolical!

NANNETTA What a good joke!

ALICE First,
To lure him to us,
We'll flatter him, and then
We'll teach him a lesson.

QUICKLY He deserves no consideration.

ALICE He's an ox.

MEG He's a man without
Honour.

ALICE He's a mountain of lard.

MEG He deserves no pity.

ALICE He's a glutton who wastes

ALL he has on gorging his fill.

NANNETTA We'll duck him in the river.

ALICE We'll roast him in the fire.

NANNETTA What joy!

ALICE What fun!

MEG *(to Quickly)* See that you play
Your part well.

QUICKLY
(perceiving Fenton, who has moved in the shrubbery)
Who's there?

MEG There's someone spying on us.

(Escono rapidamente Alice, Meg, Quickly. Nannetta resta, Fenton le torna accanto.)

FENTON Torno all'assalto.

NANNETTA *(come sfidandolo)* Torno alla gara.
Ferisci!

FENTON Para!

(Si slancia per baciarla: Nannetta si ripara il viso con una mano che Fenton bacia e vorrebbe ribaciare, ma Nannetta la solleva più alta che può e Fenton ritenta invano di raggiungerla colle labbra.)

NANNETTA La mira è in alto.
L'amor è un agile
Torneo, sua corte
Vuol che il più fragile
Vinca il più forte.

FENTON M'armo, ti guardo.
T'aspetto al varco.

NANNETTA Il labbro è l'arco.

FENTON
E il bacio è il dardo.
Bada! la freccia
Fatal già scocca
Dalla mia bocca
Sulla tua treccia.
(Le bacia la treccia.)

NANNETTA
(annodandogli il collo colla treccia mentre egli la bacia)
Eccoti avvinto.

FENTON Chiedo la vita!

NANNETTA Io son ferita,
Ma tu sei vinto.

FENTON Pietà! Facciamo
La pace e poi ...

NANNETTA E poi?

FENTON Se vuoi,
Ricominciamo.

NANNETTA Bello è quel gioco
Che dura poco.
Basta.

FENTON Amor mio!

(Alice, Meg and Quickly leave rapidly. Nannetta remains, and Fenton rejoins her.)

FENTON I return to the attack.

NANNETTA *(defying him)* And I to the defence.
Strike!

FENTON Parry!

(He rushes to kiss her: Nannetta shields her face with a hand that Fenton kisses and tries to kiss again, but Nannetta holds it as high as she can and Fenton tries to reach it with his lips.)

NANNETTA Your target is too high.
Love is a nimble
Joust, its court
Decrees that the weaker
Wins over the stronger.

FENTON I'm armed, I look at you.
I'm waiting for you at the pass.

NANNETTA Lips are the bow.

FENTON
And the kiss is the arrow.
Watch out! the fatal
Dart already flies
From my mouth
On to your tresses.
(He kisses her hair.)

NANNETTA
(winding her hair about his neck while he kisses her)
Now you're caught.

FENTON I beg for my life!

NANNETTA I'm wounded,
But you are captured.

FENTON Have mercy! Let's
Make peace and then ...

NANNETTA And then?

FENTON If you like,
Let's start all over again.

NANNETTA The best game
Is the one that lasts only briefly.
Enough of this.

FENTON My love!

NANNETTA Vien gente. – Addio!
(*Fugge da destra.*)

FENTON (*allontanandosi cantando*)
«Bocca baciata non perde ventura.»

NANNETTA (*di dentro rispondendo*)
«Anzi rinnova come fa la luna.»

(*Rientrano dal fondo Ford, Dr Caius, Bardolfo, Pistola – Fenton si unisce poi al crocchio.*)

BARDOLFO (*a Ford*) Udrai quanta egli sfoggia
Magniloquenza altera.

FORD Diceste ch'egli alloggia
Dove?

PISTOLA Alla Giarrettiera.

FORD A lui mi annuncierete,
Ma con un falso nome,
Pocia vedrete come
Lo piglio nella rete.
Ma ... non una parola.

BARDOLFO In ciarle non m'ingolio.
Io mi chiamo Bardolfo.

PISTOLA Io mi chiamo Pistola.

FORD Siam d'accordo.

BARDOLFO L'arcano
Custodirem.

PISTOLA Son sordo
E muto.

FORD Siam d'accordo
Tutti.

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA Sì.

FORD Qua la mano.

(*Si avanzano dal fondo Alice, Nannetta, Meg e Quickly.*)

DR CAJUS (*a Ford*)
Del tuo barbaro diagnostico
Forse il male è assai men barbaro.
Ti convien tentar la prova
Molestissima del ver.
Così avvien col sapor ostico
Del ginepro e del rabarbaro;
Il benessere rinnova
L'amarissimo bicchier.

NANNETTA They're coming. – Goodbye!
(*She runs out to the right.*)

FENTON (*singing as he goes*)
'The mocca that is kissed is never unlucky.'

NANNETTA (*answering from offstage*)
'Instead it revives like the moon.'

(*Ford, Dr Caius, Bardolph, Pistol re-enter from the back – Fenton then joins the group.*)

BARDOLPH (*to Ford*) You will hear how he flaunts
His arrogant bombast.

FORD Where did you say
He lodges?

PISTOL At the Garter.

FORD You will announce me to him,
But under a false name,
Then you'll see how
I catch him in my net.
But ... not a word of this.

BARDOLPH I don't involve myself in gossip.
My name is Bardolph.

PISTOL My name is Pistol.

FORD We're agreed then.

BARDOLPH We'll keep
The secret.

PISTOL I'm deaf
And dumb.

FORD We're all
Agreed.

BARDOLPH, PISTOL Yes.

FORD Here's my hand upon it.

(*Alice, Nannetta, Meg and Quickly enter from upstage.*)

DR CAJUS (*to Ford*)
Maybe the ailment is much less harsh
Than your harsh diagnosis.
You should put the truth
To the most irksome test.
It's like the unpleasant taste
Of juniper and rhubarb;
The very bitter potion
Renews your health.

PISTOLA (*a Ford*)
Voi dovete empirgli il calice
Tratto, tratto interrogandolo
Per tentar se vi riesca
Di trovar del nodo il bandolo.
Come all'acqua inclina il salice
Così al vin quel Cavalier.
Scoverete la sua tresca,
Scoprirete il suo pensier.

FORD (*a Pistola*)
Tu vedrai se bene adopera
L'arte mia con quell'infame,
E sarà prezzo dell'opera
S'io discopro le sue trame.
Se da me storno il ridicolo
Non avrem oprato invan.
Se l'attiro nell'inganno
L'angue morde il cerretan.

BARDOLFO (*a Ford*)
Messer Ford, un infortunio
Marital in voi s'incorpora,
Se non siete astuto e cauto
Quel Sir John vi tradirà.
Quel paffuto plenilunio
Che il color del vino imporpora
Troverebbe un pasto lauto
Nella vostra ingenuità.

FENTON (*fra sè*)
Qua borbotta un crocchio d'uomini,
C'è nell'aria una malia,
Là cinguetta un stuol di femine,
Spira un vento agitator.
Ma colei che in cor mi nomini,
Dolce amor, vuol esser mia!
Noi saremo come due gemine
Stelle unite in un ardor.

ALICE (*a Meg*)
Vedrai che se abbindolo
Quel grosso compar
Più lesto d'un guindolo
Lo faccio girar.

MEG (*ad Alice*)
Se il vischio lo impigola
Lo udrete strillar
E allor la sua fregola
Vedremo svampar.

PISTOL (*to Ford*)
You must fill the cup
All the while you are questioning him,
To see if you can manage
To find the nub of the plan.
Just as the willow bends down to the water
So does the knight to wine.
You'll discover his lecherous affair,
You'll discover what he has in mind.

FORD (*to Pistol*)
You'll see how artfully
I'll deal with that rogue,
And it will be well worth while
If I can uncover his schemes.
If I can avoid ridicule
We will not have striven in vain.
And if I can lure him into the deception
The snake will bite the mountebank.

BARDOLPH (*to Ford*)
Master Ford, a marital calamity
Is about to involve you,
If you aren't wily and cautious
That Sir John will betray you.
That rotund full moon
Made purple by the colour of wine
Would make a lavish meal
Of your innocence.

FENTON (*to himself*)
Here a group of men is muttering,
There's enchantment in the air,
There a clutch of women is prattling,
A wind of trouble is blowing.
But she whom, sweet love, you name
In my heart, wants to be mine!
We shall be like two
Twin stars joined in one passion.

ALICE (*to Meg*)
You'll see that if I trick
That stout character
I'll make him spin round
Faster than a spool.

MEG (*to Alice*)
If the bird-lime smears him
We'll hear him yell
And then we'll see his lust
Soon cool off.

NANNETTA (*ad Alice*)

E se i scilinguagnoli
Sapremo adoprar,
Vedremo a rigagnoli
Quell'orco sudar.

QUICKLY

Tal sempre s'esilari
Quel bel cinguettar;
Così soglion l'ilarì
Comari ciarlàr.

(*Ford, Dr Cajus, Fenton, Bardolfo, Pistola escono.*)

ALICE Qui più non si vagoli ...

NANNETTA (*a Quickly*)

Tu corri all'ufficio
Tuo.

ALICE

Vo' ch'egli miagoli
D'amor come un micio.
(*a Quickly*) È intesa.

QUICKLY Sì.

NANNETTA È detta.

ALICE Domani.

QUICKLY Sì. Sì.

ALICE Buon dì, Meg.

QUICKLY NANNETTA,
Buon dì.

NANNETTA Addio.

MEG Buon dì.

ALICE (*a Meg*)

Vedrai che quell'epa
Terribile e tronfia
Si gonfia.

ALICE, MEG Si gonfia.

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY, NANNETTA

Si gonfia e poi crepa.

ALICE «Ma il viso mio su lui risplenderà»

TUTTE «Come una stella sull'immensità.»

(*Si accomiatano e s'allontanano ridendo.*)

NANNETTA (to Alice)

And if we know how
To keep our tongues still,
We'll see that ogre
Sweating streams.

QUICKLY

May that pretty twittering
Always cheer us;
As the merry wives
Usually chatter away.

(*Ford, Dr Caius, Fenton, Bardolph, Pistol exit.*)

ALICE No more loitering here ...

NANNETTA (to Quickly)

Hurry along
To your task.

ALICE

I want him to caterwaul
With love like a tomtat.
(to Quickly) You understand.

QUICKLY Yes.

NANNETTA Agreed.

ALICE Tomorrow.

QUICKLY Yes. Yes.

ALICE Good day, Meg.

QUICKLY NANNETTA,
Good day.

NANNETTA Goodbye.

MEG Good day.

ALICE (to Meg)

You'll see that terrible
And bloated fat belly
Swell.

ALICE, MEG It will swell.

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY, NANNETTA

It will swell up and then burst.

ALICE 'But my face will shine upon him'

ALL 'Like a star over immense space.'

(*They take leave of each other and go off laughing.*)

ATTO SECONDA, parte prima

L'INTERNO DELL' OSTERIA DELLA GIARRETTIERA.

(*Falstaff sempre adagiato nel suo gran seggiolone al suo solito posto bevendo il suo Xeres. – Bardolfo e Pistola verso il fondo accanto alla porta di sinistra. – Poi Mrs Quickly.*)

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA (*cantando insieme e battendosi il petto in atto di pentimento*) Siam pentiti e contriti.

FALSTAFF (*volgendosi appena verso Bardolfo e Pistola*)

L'uomo ritorna al vizio,
La gatta al lardo ...

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA E noi, torniamo al tuo servizio.

BARDOLFO

Padron, là c'è una donna che alla vostra presenza
Chiede d'essere ammessa.

FALSTAFF S'inoltri.

(*Bardolfo esce da sinistra e ritorna subito accompagnando Quickly.*)

QUICKLY (*inchinandosi profondamente verso Falstaff il quale è ancora seduto*) Reverenza!

FALSTAFF Buon giorno, buona donna.

QUICKLY Reverenza! Se Vostra Grazia vuole,
(*avvicinandosi con gran rispetto e cautela*)
Vorrei, segretamente, dirle quattro parole.

FALSTAFF T'accordo udienza. –

(*a Bardolfo e Pistola rimasti nel fondo a spiare*) Escite.

QUICKLY (*facendo un altro inchino ed avvicinandosi più di prima*)
Reverenza! – Madonna
(*a bassa voce*)
Alice Ford ...

FALSTAFF (*alzandosi ed accostandosi a Quickly premuroso*)
Ebben?

QUICKLY Ahimè! Povera donna!
Siete un gran seduttore!

FALSTAFF (*subito*) Lo so. Continua.

ACT II, Part one

INSIDE THE GARTER INN.

(*Falstaff is, as usual, stretched out in his large armchair, in its habitual place, and drinking sherry. – Bardolph and Pistol are towards the rear near the door on the left. – Then Mistress Quickly.*)

BARDOLPH, PISTOL (*singing in unison and beating their chests as a sign of repentance*) We are penitent and contrite.

FALSTAFF (*scarcely turning to Bardolph and Pistol*)

Man returns to his vices
like the cat to the saucer of milk ...

BARDOLPH, PISTOL And we are returning to your service.

BARDOLPH

Master, there's a woman who is asking
To be admitted to your presence.

FALSTAFF Show her in.

(*Bardolph goes out and returns with Quickly.*)

QUICKLY (*curtseying deeply to Falstaff who remains seated*)
My respects, lord!

FALSTAFF Good day, good woman.

QUICKLY If it please Your Grace,
(*approaching respectfully and carefully*)
I should like to say a few words to you in secret.

FALSTAFF I grant you audience. –

(*to Bardolph and Pistol lurking at the back to spy*) Get out.

QUICKLY (*curtseying again and drawing nearer*)
My respects! – Mistress
(*quietly*)
Alice Ford ...

FALSTAFF (*rising and approaching Quickly urgently*)
Well?

QUICKLY Alas! Poor lady!
You are a great seducer!

FALSTAFF (*promptly*) I know. Continue.

QUICKLY Alice

Sta in grande agitazione d'amore per voi; vi dice
Ch'ebbe la vostra lettera, che vi ringrazia
e che
Suo marito esce sempre dalle due alle tre.

FALSTAFF Dalle due alle tre.

QUICKLY Vostra Grazia a quell'ora
Potrà liberamente salir ove dimora
La bella Alice. Povera donna! le angosce sue
Son crudeli! ha un marito geloso!

FALSTAFF (*rimuginando le parole di Quickly*)

Dalle due
Alle tre. –
(*a Quickly*)
Le dirai che impaziente aspetto
Quell'ora. Al mio dover non mancherò.

QUICKLY Ben detto.
Ma c'è un'altra ambasciata per Vostra Grazia.

FALSTAFF Parla.

QUICKLY

La bella Meg (un angelo che innamora a guardarla)
Anch'essa vi saluta molto amorosamente,
Dice che suo marito è assai di rado assente.
Povera donna! un giglio di candore e di fé!
Voi le stregate tutte.

FALSTAFF Stregoneria non c'è.
Ma un certo qual mio fascino personal ...
Dimmi: l'altra
Sa di quest'altra?

QUICKLY Oibò! La donna nasce scaltra.
Non temete.

FALSTAFF (*cercando nella sua borsa*)
Or ti vo' remunerar ...

QUICKLY Chi semina
Grazie, raccoglie amore.

FALSTAFF (*estraendo una moneta e porgendola a Quickly*)
Prendi, Mercurio-femina.
(*congedandola col gesto*)
Saluta le due dame.

QUICKLY M'inchino.
(*Esce.*)

QUICKLY Alice

Is in such a whirl of love for you; she says
She has received your letter, that she thanks you
and that
Her husband always goes out from two to three o'clock.

FALSTAFF From two to three.

QUICKLY Your Grace at that time
Can freely visit
Fair Alice's home. Poor lady! her sufferings
Are cruel! she has a jealous husband!

FALSTAFF (*digesting Quickly's words*)

From two
To three. –
(*to Quickly*)
You will tell her I'm impatiently awaiting
That hour. I'll not fail in my duty.

QUICKLY Well said.
But I have another message for Your Grace.

FALSTAFF Speak.

QUICKLY

The lovely Meg (*an angel whom one loves at sight*)
Also greets you most tenderly,
She says that her husband is very seldom from home.
Poor lady! a lily of purity and trust!
You bewitch them all.

FALSTAFF Witchcraft has nothing to do with it.
Just a certain personal fascination of my own ...
Tell me: does
The one know of the other?

QUICKLY Oh fie! Women are born deceitful.
Have no fear.

FALSTAFF (*searching in his purse*)
Now I wish to reward you ...

QUICKLY Who sows favours
Reaps love.

FALSTAFF (*extracting a coin and giving it to Quickly*)
Take this, you female Mercury.
(*dismissing her*)
Greet the two ladies from me.

QUICKLY I bow to you, sir.
(*She goes out.*)

(*Falstaff solo, poi Bardolfo, poi Mr Ford, poi Pistola.*)

[12] **FALSTAFF** (Alice è mia!)
Va, vecchio John, va, va per la tua via.
Questa tua vecchia carne ancora sprema
Qualche dolcezza a te.
Tutte le donne ammutinate insieme
Si dannano per me!
Buon corpo di Sir John, ch'io nutro e sazio,
Va, ti ringrazio.

BARDOLFO (*entrando da sinistra*)
Padron; di là c'è un certo Mastro Fontana
Che anela di conoscermi; offre una damigiana
Di Cipro per l'asciolvere di Vostra Signoria.

FALSTAFF Il suo nome è Fontana?

BARDOLFO Sì.

FALSTAFF Bene accolta sia
La fontana che spande un simile liquore!
Entri. –
(*Bardolfo esce.*)
Va, vecchio John, per la tua via.

(*Ford travestito entra da sinistra, preceduto da Bardolfo che si ferma all'uscio e s'inchina al suo passaggio e seguito da Pistola, il quale tiene una damigiana che depone sul tavolo. – Pistola e Bardolfo restano nel fondo. Ford tiene un sacchetto in mano.*)

FORD (*avanzandosi dopo un grande inchino a Falstaff*)
[13] Signore,
V'assista il cielo!

FALSTAFF (*ricambiando il saluto*)
Assista voi pur, signore.

FORD (*sempre complimentoso*)
Io sono,
Davver, molto indiscreto, e vi chiedo perdono,
Se, senza cerimonie, qui vengo e sprovveduto
Di più lunghi preamboli.

FALSTAFF Voi siete il benvenuto.

FORD
In me vedete un uom che ha un'abbondanza grande
Degli agi della vita; un uom che spende e spande
Come più gli talenta pur di passar mattana.
Io mi chiamo Fontana!

FALSTAFF (*andando a stringergli la mano con grande cordialità*)
Caro signor Fontana!

(*Falstaff, alone, then Bardolph, Ford and Pistol.*)

FALSTAFF (Alice is mine!)
Go, old John, go your way.
This old flesh of yours can still press out
Some sweetness for you.
All women rising in mutiny together
Risk damnation for me!
Good body of Sir John, that I nourish and sate,
Go along, I thank you.

BARDOLPH (*entering from the left*)
Sir Knight; out there is a certain Master Brook
Who longs to make your acquaintance; he offers
A demi-john of Cyprus for your Lordship's breakfast.

FALSTAFF His name is Brook?

BARDOLPH Yes.

FALSTAFF Welcome be
The brook that dispenses such liquor!
Let him come in. –
(*Bardolph goes out.*)
Go, old John, go your way.

(*Ford in disguise enters from the left, preceded by Bardolph, who pauses at the door and bows as he goes past, and followed by Pistol, bringing in a demi-john which he puts on the table. – Pistol and Bardolph remain at the back. Ford is holding a small bag in his hand.*)

FORD (*coming forward after bowing deeply to Falstaff*)
Sir,
Heaven defend you!

FALSTAFF (*exchanging the greeting*)
And you too, sir.

FORD (*still obsequiously*)
I am,
Indeed, very indiscreet, and crave your pardon,
If I come here without ceremony
And unprovided with longer introduction.

FALSTAFF You are welcome.

FORD
In me you see a man who has a plentiful store
Of the comforts of life; a man who spends lavishly
As he pleases and to pass the time away.
My name is Brook!

FALSTAFF (*advancing to shake his hand with great cordiality*)
Dear Master Brook!

Voglio fare con voi più ampia conoscenza.

FORD

Caro Sir John, desidero parlarvi in confidenza.

BARDOLFO (*sottovoce a Pistola nel fondo, spiando*)
(Attento!)

PISTOLA (*sottovoce a Bardolfo*) (Zitto!)

BARDOLFO (Guarda! Scommetto! Egli va dritto
Nel trabocchetto.)

PISTOLA (Ford se lo intrappola ...)

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA (Zitto!)

FALSTAFF

(*a Bardolfo e Pistola, i quali escono al cenno di Falstaff*)
Che fate là? –
(*a Ford, col quale è rimasto solo*)
V'ascolto.

FORD Sir John; m'infonde ardire
Un ben noto proverbio popolare: si vuol dire
Che l'oro apre ogni porta, che l'oro è un talismano,
Che l'oro vince tutto.

FALSTAFF L'oro è un buon capitano
Che marcia avanti.

FORD (*avviandosi verso il tavolo*)
Ebbene. Ho un sacco di monete
Qua, che mi pesa assai. Sir John, se voi volete
Aiutarmi a portarlo...

FALSTAFF (*prende il sacchetto e lo depone sul tavolo*)
Con gran piacer ... non so,
Davver, per qual mio merito, Messer ...

FORD Ve lo dirò.

[14] C'è a Windsor una dama, bella e leggiadra molto,
Si chiama Alice; è moglie d'un certo Ford.

FALSTAFF V'ascolto.

FORD

Io l'amo e lei non m'ama; le scrivo, non risponde;
La guardo, non mi guarda; la cerco e si nasconde.
Per lei sprecai tesori, gittai doni su doni,
Escogitai, tremando, il voi delle occasioni.
Ahimè! tutto fu vano! Rimasi sulle scale,
Negletto, a bocca asciutta, cantando un madrigale.

FALSTAFF (*cantarellando scherzosamente*)
«L'amor, l'amor che non ci dà mai tregue

I want to make better acquaintance with you.

FORD

Dear Sir John, I wish to speak to you in confidence.

BARDOLPH (*quietly to Pistol, watching from behind*)
(Watch out!)

PISTOL (*quietly to Bardolph*) (Be quiet!)

BARDOLPH (Look! I'll bet he'll go straight
Into the trap.)

PISTOL (Ford will ensnare him ...)

BARDOLPH, PISTOL (Quiet!)

FALSTAFF

(*to Bardolph and Pistol, who leave at a sign from Falstaff*)
What are you doing there? –
(*to Ford, with whom he remains alone*)
I'm listening.

FORD Sir John; I'll be bold to quote
A well-known popular proverb: they say
That gold opens every door, that gold is a talisman,
That gold conquers all.

FALSTAFF Gold is a good captain
That marches onward.

FORD (*going to the table*)
Very well. I have a bag of coins
Here, that weighs me down. Sir John, if you will
Help me carry it...

FALSTAFF (*taking the bag and putting it on the table*)
With great pleasure ... but I really don't know
By what merit of mine, sir ...

FORD I'll tell you.

In Windsor there is a lady, beautiful and most charming,
Whose name is Alice; she's the wife of a certain Ford.

FALSTAFF I'm listening.

FORD

I love her but she doesn't love me; I write to her, she doesn't
answer; I look at her, she doesn't look at me; I seek her but she hides
from me. For her I have squandered treasures, Wasted gift upon gift,
Trembling, I have studied the flight of chance.
Alas! all in vain! I was left on the stairs,
Neglected, disappointed, singing a madrigal.

FALSTAFF (*singing playfully*)
'Love, love that never gives us rest

Finchè la vita strugge
È come l'ombra ...»

FORD «che chi fugge ...»

FALSTAFF «insegue ...»

FORD «E chi l'insegue ...»

FALSTAFF «fugge.»

FORD E questo madrigale l'ho appreso a prezzo d'ôr.

FALSTAFF

Quest'è il destin fatale del misero amator.
Essa non vi die' mai luogo a lusinghe?

FORD No.

FALSTAFF Ma infin, perchè v'aprite a me?

FORD Ve lo dirò:
Voi siete un gentiluomo prode, arguto, facondo,
Voi siete un uom di guerra, voi siete un uom di mondo ...

FALSTAFF (*con gesto d'umiltà*) Oh! ...

FORD

Non v'adulo, e quello è un sacco di monete:
Spendetele! spendetele! sì, spendete e spendete
Tutto il mio patrimonio! Siate ricco e felice!
Ma, in contraccambio, chiedo che conquistiate Alice!

FALSTAFF Strana ingiunzione!

FORD

Mi spiego: quella crudel beltà
Sempre è vissuta in grande fede di castità.
La sua virtù importuna m'abbargliava gli occhi,
La bella inespugnabile dicea:
«Guai se mi tocchi!»
Ma se voi l'espugnate, poi, posso anch'io sperar,
Da fallo nasce fallo e allor ... Che ve ne par?

FALSTAFF

Prima di tutto, senza complimenti, Messere,
Accetto il sacco. E poi (fede di cavaliere;
Qua la mano!) farò le vostre brame sazie.
(*stringendo forte la mano a Ford*)
Voi, la moglie di Ford possederete.

FORD Grazie!!

FALSTAFF

Io son già molto innanzi; (non c'è ragion ch'io taccia
Con voi) fra una mezz'ora sarà nelle mie braccia.

As long as life endures
It is like the shadow ...'

FORD 'which if you flee ...'

FALSTAFF 'follows you ...'

FORD 'And when you follow it ...'

FALSTAFF 'it flees from you.'

FORD And this madrigal I have learnt at great cost.

FALSTAFF

This is the fatal destiny of the wretched lover.
Did she never give you any hope of satisfaction?

FORD No.

FALSTAFF But after all, why do you confide in me?

FORD I'll tell you:
You are a gentleman, gallant, sharp-witted, eloquent,
You are a man of war, you are a man of the world ...

FALSTAFF (*self-deprecatingly*) Oh! ...

FORD

I'm not flattering you, and that is a bag of money:
Spend it! spend it! yes, spend it and squander
My whole inheritance! Be rich and happy!
But, in exchange, I ask you to win Alice!

FALSTAFF A strange commission!

FORD

I'll explain: that cruel beauty
Has always lived in great repute of chastity.
Her tiresome virtue dazzled my eyes,
The lovely unconquerable one seemed to say:
'Do not dare to touch me!'
But if you win her, then, I too may hope,
One fault leads to another and then ... What do you think?

FALSTAFF

First of all, without further ado, sir,
I accept the money-bag. And then (knight's honour;
Here's my hand on it!) I shall see that your desires
are satisfied.
(*claspig Ford's hand*) You will possess Ford's wife.

FORD Thank you!!

FALSTAFF

I've already made great progress; (no reason to keep it
From you) in half an hour she will be in my arms.

FORD Chi? ...

FALSTAFF Alice. Essa mandò dianzi una ...
Confidente
Per dirmi che quel tanghero di suo marito è assente
Dalle due alle tre.

FORD Lo conoscete?

FALSTAFF Il diavolo
Se lo porti all'inferno con Menelao suo avolo!
Quel tanghero! quel tanghero!
Vedrai! Te lo cornifico netto! se mi fastordna
Gli sparo una girandola di botte sulle corna!
Quel Messer Ford è un bue! Un bue!
Te lo corbello,
Vedrai! Ma è tardi. Aspettami qua.
Vado a farmi bello.
(Piglia il sacco di monete ed esce dal fondo.)
(Ford solo, poi Falstaff.)

15 **FORD** È sogno? o realtà? ... Due rami enormi
Crescon sulla mia testa.
È un sogno? – Mastro Ford! Mastro Ford! Dormi? Svegliati! Su!
ti desta!
Tua moglie sgarra e mette in mal'assetto
L'onor tuo, la tua casa ed il tuo letto!
L'ora è fissata, tramato l'inganno;
Sei gabbato e truffato! ...
E poi diranno
Che un marito geloso è un insensato!
Già dietro a me nomi d'infame conio
Fischian passando; mormora lo schermo.
O matrimonio: Inferno!
Donna: Demonio!
Nella lor moglie abbian fede i babbai!
Affiderei
La mia birra a un Tedesco,
Tutto il mio desco
A un Olandese lurco,
La mia bottiglia d'acquavite a un Turco,
Non mia moglie a se stessa. – O laida sorte!
Quella brutta parola in cor mi torna:
Le corna! Bue! capron! le fusa torte!
Ah! le corna! le corna!
Ma non mi sfuggirai! no! sozzo, reo,
Dannato epicureo!
Prima li accoppio
E poi li colgo. lo scoppio!

FORD Who? ...

FALSTAFF Alice. A short time ago she sent me a ...
Confidante
To tell me that that her lout of a husband
Is out from two to three.

FORD Do you know him?

FALSTAFF The devil
Take him off to Hell with Menelaus, his ancestor!
That lout! that lout!
You'll see! I'll cuckold him neatly! if he bothers me
I'll deliver a hail of blows on his horns!
That Master Ford is a dumb ox! An ox!
I'll trick him for you,
You'll see! But it's late. Wait for me here.
I'll go and make myself attractive.
(He takes the money-bag and leaves at the back.)
(Ford, alone, then Falstaff.)

FORD Is this a dream? or reality? ... Two huge
Antlers are growing from my head.
Is it a dream? – Master Ford! Master Ford! Are you asleep?
Wake up! Come! rouse yourself!
Your wife is straying and is wrecking
Your honour, your home and your bed!
The hour is fixed, the fraud planned;
You're cheated and tricked! ...
And yet they will say
That a jealous husband is out of his mind!
Already behind me as I pass, names of the most infamous kind
Are being whispered; there are mocking murmurs.
Oh marriage: it's hell!
Woman: a devil!
Let fools have faith in their wives!
I'd trust
My beer to a German,
All my table
To a greedy Dutchman,
My bottle of brandy to a Turk,
But not my wife to herself. – O foul fate!
That ugly word again enters my heart:
The horns! Ox! billy-goat! the cuckold's sign!
Ah! cuckold! cuckold!
But you'll not escape me! no! you filthy, evil,
Damned Epicurean!
First I'll throw them together
And then I'll catch them. I'm bursting!

Vendercherò l'affronto!
Laudata sempre sia
Nel fondo del mio cor la gelosia.

FALSTAFF *(rientrando dalla porta del fondo. Ha un farsetto nuovo, cappello e bastone.)*
16 Eccoli qua. – Son pronto.
M'accompagnate un tratto?

FORD Vi metto sulla via.
(Si avviano: giunti presso alla soglia fanno dei gesti complimentosi per cedere la precedenza del passo.)

FALSTAFF Prima voi.
FORD Prima voi.
FALSTAFF No. Sono in casa mia.
(ritirandosi un poco) Passate.

FORD *(ritirandosi)* Prego ...
FALSTAFF È tardi. L'appuntamento preme.
FORD Non fate complimenti ...
FALSTAFF, FORD Ebben; passiamo insieme.
(Prende il braccio di Ford sotto il suo ed escono a braccetto.)

CD2

ATTO SECONDA, parte seconda

UNA SALA NELLA CASA DI FORD.

Ampia finestra nel fondo. Porta a destra, porta a sinistra e un'altra porta verso l'angolo di destra nel fondo che riesce sulla scala. Un'altra scala nell'angolo del fondo a sinistra. Dal gran finestrone spalancato si vede il giardino. Un paravento chiuso sta appoggiato alla parete di sinistra, accanto ad un vasto camino. Armadio addossato alla parete di destra. Un tavolino, una cassapanca. Lungo le pareti un seggiolone e qualche scranna. Sul seggiolone un liuto. Sul tavolo dei fiori.

(Alice, Meg, poi Quickly dalla porta a destra ridendo. Poi Nannetta.)

1 **ALICE** Presenteremo un bill, per una tassa

I'll avenge this outrage!
Let jealousy be praised forever
In the depths of my heart.

FALSTAFF *(re-entering from the back. He is clad in a new doublet and has a hat and cane.)*
Here I am. – I'm ready.
Will you accompany me part of the way?

FORD I'll see you on your way.
(They set off: reaching the other door, they both politely invite each other to go out first.)

FALSTAFF You go first.
FORD No, you first.
FALSTAFF No. I'm in my own home.
(withdrawing a little) You leave first.

FORD *(similarly)* I beg you ...
FALSTAFF It's late. My appointment is pressing.
FORD Don't stand on ceremony ...
FALSTAFF, FORD Very well; let's go together.
(He takes Ford's arm under his and they go out arm in arm.)

CD2

ACT II, Part two

A ROOM IN FORD'S HOUSE.

A large window at the rear. Doors right and left, and another in the right-hand corner at the back, leading to the staircase. There is another staircase in the left-hand corner at the rear. Through the large, wide-open window a garden can be seen. A closed screen is leaning against the left-hand wall, next to a huge fireplace. A cupboard stands against the wall on the right. There is a small table and a chest. Along the walls are an armchair and a few high-backed chairs. On the armchair lies a lute. There are flowers on the table.

(Alice, Meg, then Quickly from the door on the right, laughing. Then Nannetta.)

ALICE We'll present a bill to Parliament

Al parlamento, sulla gente grassa.

QUICKLY (*entrando*) Comari!

ALICE (*accorrendo con Meg verso Quickly, mentre Nannetta ch'è entrata anch'essa resta triste in disparte*) Ebben?

MEG Che c'è?

QUICKLY Sarà sconfitto!

ALICE Brava!

QUICKLY Fra poco gli farem la festa!

ALICE, MEG Bene!

QUICKLY Piombò nel laccio a capofitto.

ALICE Narrami tutto, lesta.

MEG Lesta.

ALICE Lesta.

QUICKLY Giunta all'Albergo della Giarrettiera
Chiedo d'essere ammessa alla presenza
Del Cavalier, segreta messaggera.

Sir John si degna d'accordarmi udienza,
M'accoglie tronfio in furfantasca posa:
«Buon giorno, buona donna». «Reverenza.»
A lui m'inchino molto ossequiosamente,
Poi passo alle notizie ghiotte.

Lui beve grosso ed ogni mia massiccia
Frottola inghiotte.

Infin, per farla spiccia,
Vi crede entrambe innamorate cotte
Delle bellezze sue.

(*ad Alice*)

E lo vedrete presto ai vostri piè.

ALICE Quando?

QUICKLY Oggi, qui, dalle due alle tre.

ALICE, MEG Dalle due alle tre.

ALICE Son già le due.

(*correndo subito all'uscio del fondo e chiamando*)
Olà! Ned! Will!

(*a Quickly*)

Già tutto ho preparato.

(*torna a gridare dall'uscio verso l'esterno*)

Portate qui la cesta del bucato.

QUICKLY Sarà un affare gaio!

For a tax on fat people.

QUICKLY (*entering*) Mistresses!

ALICE (*hurrying towards Quickly with Meg, while Nannetta, who has also come in, remains sadly apart*) Well?

MEG What's the matter?

QUICKLY He'll be defeated!

ALICE Well done!

QUICKLY We'll soon punish him!

ALICE, MEG Good!

QUICKLY He fell headlong into the trap.

ALICE Tell me everything, quickly.

MEG Hurry.

ALICE Hurry.

QUICKLY When I got to the Garter Inn
I asked to be admitted to the presence
Of the knight, as a secret messenger.

Sir John deigned to grant me audience,
He received me pompously in a roguish way:
'Good day, good woman'. 'My respects.'
I curtsayed most obsequiously to him
Then passed on to my exquisite news.

He gulped it down greedily and swallowed
Every far-fetched nonsense I spun him.

Finally, in short,
He believes you both
To be madly in love with his graces.

(*to Alice*)

And very soon you'll find him at your feet.

ALICE When?

QUICKLY Today, here, from two to three.

ALICE, MEG From two to three.

ALICE It's already two o'clock.

(*hurrying to the door at the back and calling*)
Ho there! Ned! Will!

(*to Quickly*)

Everything is already prepared.

(*turning to shout to the servants outside*)

Bring the laundry basket here.

QUICKLY This will be sport!

ALICE Nannetta, e tu non ridi? Che cos'hai?
(*avvicinandosi a Nannetta ed accarezzandola*)
Tu piangi? Che cos'hai? Dillo a tua madre.

NANNETTA (*singhiozzando*) Mio padre ...

ALICE Ebben?

NANNETTA Mio padre ...

ALICE Ebben?

NANNETTA Mio padre ...
(*scoppiando in lagrime*)
Vuole ch'io mi mariti al Dottor Cajot!

ALICE A quel pedante?!

QUICKLY Oibò!

MEG A quel gonzo!

ALICE A quel grullo!

NANNETTA A quel bisavolo!

ALICE No! No!

NANNETTA No! No!
No! No! Piuttosto lapidata viva ...

ALICE Da una mitraglia di torsi di cavolo.

QUICKLY Ben detto!

MEG Brava!

ALICE Non temer.

NANNETTA (*saltando di gioia*) Evviva!
Col Dottor Cajo non mi sposerò!

(*Intanto entrano due servi portando una cesta piena di biancheria.*)

ALICE (*ai servi*)

Mettete là. Poi, quando avrò chiamato,
Vuoterete la cesta nel fossato.

NANNETTA Bum!

ALICE (*a Nannetta, poi ai servi che escono*)
Taci. – Andate.

NANNETTA Che bombardamento.

ALICE (*corre a pigliare una sedia e la mette presso al tavolo*)
Prepariamo la scena.
Qua una sedia.

ALICE Nannetta, but you're not laughing? What ails you?
(*going to Nannetta and caressing her*)
Are you crying? What's the matter? Tell your mother.

NANNETTA (*sobbing*) My father ...

ALICE Well?

NANNETTA Father ...

ALICE Well?

NANNETTA Father...
(*bursting into tears*)
Wants me to marry Dr Caius!!

ALICE That pedant?!

QUICKLY Oh fie!

MEG That fool!

ALICE That ass!

NANNETTA That old dotard!

ALICE No! No!

NANNETTA No! No!
No! No! I'd rather be stoned to death ...

ALICE By a volley of cabbage-stalks.

QUICKLY Well said!

MEG Good girl!

ALICE Don't be afraid.

NANNETTA (*jumping for joy*) Marvellous!
I'll not have to marry Dr Caius!

(*Meanwhile two servants have come in carrying a basket full of dirty linen.*)

ALICE (*to the servants*)

Put it there. Later, when I call you
You'll empty the basket into the ditch.

NANNETTA Splash!

ALICE (*to Nannetta, then to the servants who leave*)
Hush. – Go now.

NANNETTA What a bombardment.

ALICE (*hurrying to get a chair to put by the table*)
Let's set the scene.
A chair here.

NANNETTA

(corre a pigliare il liuto e lo mette sulla tavola)
 Qua il mio liuto.

ALICE Apriamo il paravento.

(Nannetta e Meg corrono a prendere il paravento, lo aprono dopo averlo collocato fra la cesta e il camino.)

Bravissime! Così. – Più aperto ancora.

Fra poco s'incomincia la commedia.

Gaie comari di Windsor! È l'ora!

L'ora d'alzar la risata sonora!

L'alta risata che scoppia, che scherza,

Che sfolgora, armata

Di dardi e di sferza!

Gaie comari! festosa brigata!

Sul lieto viso

Spunti il sorriso,

Splenda del riso l'acuto fulgor!

Favilla incendiaria

Di gioia nell'aria,

Di gioia nel cor.

(a Meg)

A noi! – Tu la parte

Farai che ti spetta.

MEG *(ad Alice)* Tu corri il tuo rischio
 Col grosso compar.

QUICKLY Io sto alla vedetta.

ALICE *(a Quickly)* Se sbagli ti fischio.

NANNETTA Io resto in disparte
 Sull'uscio a spiar.

ALICE

E mostreremo all'uom che l'allegria
 D'oneste donne ogni onestà comporta.

Fra le femine quella è la più ria

Che fa la gattamorta.

ALICE, NANETTA, MEG Gaie comari di Windsor, ecc

QUICKLY *(che sarà andata alla finestra)* Eccolo! È lui!

ALICE Dov'è?

QUICKLY Poco discosto.

NANNETTA Presto.

QUICKLY A salir s'avvia.

ALICE *(prima a Nannetta indicando l'uscio a sinistra:*

NANNETTA

(running to fetch her lute and putting it on the table)
 Here's my lute.

ALICE Let's open up the screen.

(Nannetta and Meg run to bring the screen and open it, after placing it between the basket and the fireplace.)

Excellent! Just so. – A little wider open.

The comedy will start soon.

Merry wives of Windsor! the time has come!

The time to raise resounding laughter!

Hearty laughter that bursts out, that jokes,

That flashes, armed

With darts and lash!

Merry wives! joyful band!

Let a smile

Shine on your happy faces,

Let the sharp glitter of laughter gleam!

It's the kindling spark

Of joy in the air,

Of joy in the heart.

(to Meg)

Hurrah for us! – You shall do

Your part as we decided.

MEG *(to Alice)* You run a risk
 With the fat character.

QUICKLY I'll be on watch.

ALICE *(to Quickly)* If you make a mistake, I'll hiss you.

NANNETTA I'll stay by
 The door and watch.

ALICE

And we'll show men that the merriment

Of virtuous women is quite innocent.

The most guilty of women

Is the one who plays the innocent.

ALICE, NANETTA, MEG Merry Wives of Windsor, etc

QUICKLY (who has gone to the window) There he is! It's he!

ALICE Where is he?

QUICKLY Not far off.

NANNETTA Quickly.

QUICKLY He's coming upstairs.

ALICE *(first to Nannetta, indicating the door on the left:*

poi a Meg indicando l'uscio di destra)

Tu di qua. Tu di là!

NANNETTA *(esce correndo da sinistra)* Al posto!

MEG *(esce correndo da destra con Quickly)*

Al posto!

(Alice sola. Poi Falstaff. Poi Quickly. Poi Meg.)

(Alice si sarà seduta accanto al tavolo, avrà preso il liuto toccando qualche accordo.)

FALSTAFF *(entra con vivacità – vedendola suonare si mette a cantarellare)*

3 «Alfin t'ho colto

Raggiante fior

T'ho colto!»

(Prende Alice pel busto. Alice avrà cessato di suonare e si sarà alzata.)

Ed or potrò morir felice.

Avrò vissuto molto

Dopo quest'ora di beato amor.

ALICE O soave Sir John!

FALSTAFF Mia bella Alice!

Non so far lo svenevole,

Nè lusingar, nè usar frase fiorita,

Ma dirò tosto un mio pensier colpevole.

ALICE Cioè?

FALSTAFF Cioè:

Vorrei che Mastro Ford

Passasse a miglior vita ...

ALICE Perché?

FALSTAFF Perché? – Lo chiedi?

Saresti la mia Lady

E Falstaff il tuo Lord.

ALICE Povera Lady invier!

FALSTAFF Degna d'un Re.

T'immagino fregiata del mio stemma,

Mostrar fra gemma e gemma

La pompa del tuo sen.

Nell'iri ardente e mobile dei rai

Dell'adamante,

Col picciol piè nel nobile

Cerchio d'un guardinfante

Risplenderai

Più fulgida d'un ampio arcobalen.

then to Meg, pointing to the door on the right)

You here. You there!

NANNETTA *(running out to the left)* To my place!

MEG *(running out to the right with Quickly)*

To my place!

(Alice alone. Then Falstaff. Then Quickly. Then Meg.)

(Alice seats herself at the table, takes up the lute and plays a few chords.)

FALSTAFF *(entering briskly – seeing her playing the lute, he starts to sing)*

'At last I've plucked you

Radiant flower

I've plucked you!

(He takes Alice by the waist. Alice stops playing and rises.)

And now I can die happy.

I shall have lived enough

After this hour of blissful love.

ALICE Oh sweet Sir John!

FALSTAFF My lovely Alice!

I know not how to simper,

Nor flatter, or use flowery phrases,

But I'll tell you now of a guilty thought of mine.

ALICE And that is?

FALSTAFF That is:

I wish Master Ford

Would pass on to a better life ...

ALICE Why?

FALSTAFF Why? – How can you ask?

You could be my lady

And Falstaff your lord.

ALICE A poor lady, indeed!

FALSTAFF One fit for a king.

I can see you adorned with my crest,

Displaying your glorious bosom

In a setting of gems.

In the burning flash and sparkle

Of the diamond's rays,

With your tiny feet nobly

Encircled by a farthingale

You will shine

More brightly than a broad rainbow.

ALICE

Ogni più bel gioiel mi nuoce e spregio
 Il finto idolo d'or.
 Mi basta un vel legato in croce, un fregio
 Al cinto e in testa un fior.
(Si mette un fiore nei capelli.)

FALSTAFF (per abbracciarla) Sirena!

ALICE *(facendo un passo indietro)* Adulator!

FALSTAFF Soli noi siamo
 E non temiamo agguato.

ALICE Ebben?

FALSTAFF Io t'amo!

ALICE *(scostandosi un poco)* Voi siete nel peccato!

FALSTAFF *(avvicinandola)*
 Sempre l'amor l'occasione azzecca.

ALICE Sir John!

FALSTAFF
 Chi segue vocazion non pecca.
 T'amo! e non è mia colpa ...

ALICE *(interrompendolo)*
 Se tanta avete vulnerabil polpa.

4 **FALSTAFF** Quand'ero paggio
 Del Duca di Norfolk ero sottile,
 Ero un miraggio
 Vago, leggero, gentile, gentile.
 Quello era il tempo del mio verde Aprile,
 Quello era il tempo del mio lieto Maggio.
 Tant'ero smilzo, flessibile e snello
 Che sarei guizzato attraverso un anello.

ALICE Voi mi celiate.
 Io temo i vostri inganni.
 Temo che amiate ...

FALSTAFF Chi?

ALICE Meg.

FALSTAFF Colei? M'è in uggia la sua faccia.

ALICE Non traditemi, John ...

FALSTAFF Mi par mill'anni
 D'averti fra le braccia.
(rincorrendola e tentando d'abbracciarla)
 T'amo ...

ALICE

The finest jewels do not suit me and I despise
 The false idol of gold.
 For me it's enough to have a veil tied crosswise
 A buckle at my waist and a flower in my hair.
(She puts a flower in her hair.)

FALSTAFF *(about to embrace her)* Siren!

ALICE *(taking a step backwards)* Flatterer!

FALSTAFF We are alone
 And fear no discovery.

ALICE And so?

FALSTAFF I love you!

ALICE *(moving away slightly)* You are sliding into sin!

FALSTAFF *(approaching)*
 Love always seizes its opportunity.

ALICE Sir John!

FALSTAFF
 The man who follows his vocation does not sin.
 I love you! and it is not my fault ...

ALICE *(interrupting him)*
 If you have so much vulnerable flesh.

FALSTAFF When I was page
 To the Duke of Norfolk I was slim,
 I was a vision
 Charming, light, graceful, so graceful.
 That was the time of my green April,
 That was the time of my merry May.
 I was so slender, supple and nimble
 That I could have slipped through a ring.

ALICE You are teasing me.
 I fear you are deceiving me.
 I fear that you love ...

FALSTAFF Who?

ALICE Meg.

FALSTAFF Her? I can't stand her face.

ALICE Don't betray me, John ...

FALSTAFF It seems like a thousand years
 Before having you in my arms.
(chasing her and trying to embrace her)
 I love you ...

ALICE *(difendendosi)* Per carità! ...

FALSTAFF *(la prende attraverso il busto)* Vieni!

QUICKLY *(dall'antisala gridando)* Signora Alice!

FALSTAFF *(abbandona Alice e rimane turbato)* Chi va là?

QUICKLY *(entrando e fingendo agitazione)*
 Signora Alice!

ALICE Che c'è?

QUICKLY *(rapidamente interrotta dalla foga)* Mia signora!
 C'è Mistress Meg, e vuol parlarvi, buffa ...
 Strepita, s'abbaruffa ...

FALSTAFF Alla malora!

QUICKLY
 E vuol passar e la trattengo a stento ...

FALSTAFF Dove m'ascondo?

ALICE Dietro il paravento.

(Falstaff si rimpiaffa dietro il paravento. Quando Falstaff è nascosto, Quickly fa cenno a Meg che sta dietro l'uscio di destra: Meg entra fingendo d'essere agitatissima. Quickly torna ad escire.)

MEG ALICE! che spavento!
 Che chiasso! Che discordia!
 Non perdere un momento.
 Fuggi! ...

ALICE Misericordia!
 Che avvenne?

MEG Il tuo consorte
 Vien gridando «accorr'uomo!»
 Dice ...

ALICE *(presto a bassa voce)* (Parla più forte.)

MEG Che vuol scannare un uomo!

ALICE *(come sopra)* (Non ridere.)

MEG Ei correva
 Invaso da tremendo
 Furor! Maledicendo
 Tutte le figlie d'Eva!

ALICE Misericordia!

MEG Dice
 Che un tuo ganzo hai nascosto,
 Lo vuole ad ogni costo
 Scoprir ...

ALICE *(struggling)* For pity's sake! ...

FALSTAFF *(taking her by the waist)* Come!

QUICKLY *(shouting from the hall)* Mistress Alice!

FALSTAFF *(letting Alice go, distressed)* Who is there?

QUICKLY *(entering and pretending to be disturbed)*
 Mistress Alice!

ALICE What is it?

QUICKLY *(rapidly, in spurts)* My lady!
 It's Mistress Meg, she wants to talk to you, she's panting ...
 Shouting, causing a stir ...

FALSTAFF The devil take her!

QUICKLY
 And she wants to come in and I can hardly stop her ...

FALSTAFF Where can I hide?

ALICE Behind the screen.

(Falstaff crouches behind the screen. When Falstaff is hidden, Quickly motions to Meg, who is standing behind the door on the right: Meg enters, pretending to be extremely agitated. Quickly goes out again.)

MEG ALICE! what a fright!
 Such a noise! What a row!
 Don't lose a moment.
 Fly! ...

ALICE Merciful Heaven!
 What's happened?

MEG Your husband
 Is coming, shouting 'help!'
 He says ...

ALICE *(quickly in a low voice)* (Speak louder.)

MEG That he wants to slit someone's throat!

ALICE *(as before)* (Don't laugh.)

MEG He was rushing
 In a terrible
 Fury! And cursing
 All the daughters of Eve!

ALICE Mercy on us!

MEG He says
 You've hidden a lover,
 He intends to find him
 At all costs ...

QUICKLY (*ritornando spaventatissima e gridando più di prima*) Signora Alice!
Vien Mastro Ford! Salvatevi!
È come una tempesta!
Strepita, tuona, fulmina,
Sì dà dei pugni in testa,
Scoppia in minacce ed urla ...

ALICE
(*avvicinandosi a Quickly a bassa voce e un poco allarmata*)
(Dassenno oppur da burla?)

QUICKLY (*ancora ad alta voce*)
Dassenno. Egli scavalca
Le siepi del giardino ...
Lo segue una gran calca
Di gente ... è già vicino ...
Mentr'io vi parlo ei valca
L'ingresso ...

FORD (*di dentro urlando*) Malandrino!!

FALSTAFF (*sgomentatissimo avrà già fatto un passo per fuggire dal paravento, ma udendo la voce dell'uomo torna a rimpiattarsi*)
Il diavolo cavalca
Sull'arco di un violino!!

(*Alice con una mossa rapidissima lo chiude nel paravento, in modo che non è più veduto.*)

(*Alice, Meg, Quickly, Mr Ford, poi subito il Dr Cajus, poi Fenton, poi Bardolfo e Pistola, poi Nannetta. Falstaff sempre nascosto nel paravento.*)

FORD (*dal fondo gridando rivolto a chi lo segue*)
Chiudete le porte! Sbarrate le scale!
Seguitemi a caccia! Scoviamo il cinghiale!
(*Entrano correndo il Dr Cajus e Fenton.*)
Correte sull'orme, sull'usta.
(*a Fenton*) Tu fruga
Negli anditi.

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA (*irrompono nella sala gridando, mentre Fenton corre a sinistra*) A caccia!

FORD (*a Bardolfo e Pistola indicando la camera a destra*)
Sventate la fuga!
Cercate là dentro!

(*Bardolfo e Pistola si precipitano nella camera coi bastoni levati.*)

QUICKLY (*returning terrified and shouting more loudly than before*) Mistress Alice!
Master Ford is coming! Save yourself!
He's like a thunderstorm!
He's yelling, thundering, swearing,
Striking himself on the forehead,
He's uttering threats and bawling ...

ALICE
(*approaching Quickly, in a low voice, a little frightened*)
(In earnest or in jest?)

QUICKLY (*still at the top of her voice*)
Really. He's climbing over
The garden hedge ...
A whole crowd of people
Is behind him ... he's near now ...
While I speak he's at
The door ...

FORD (*offstage, yelling*) Villain!!!

FALSTAFF (*frightened, about to leave the screen, but hearing the man's voice, crouching down again*)
The devil bestrides
A fiddle-bow to lead the dance!!

(*With a rapid movement Alice closes the screen around Falstaff so that he is no longer visible.*)

(*Alice, Meg, Quickly, Ford, then immediately Dr Caius, then Fenton, then Bardolph and Pistol, then Nannetta. Falstaff is still hidden behind the screen.*)

FORD (*from the rear, shouting to his followers*)
Shut the doors! Bar the staircases!
Follow me in the hunt! We'll flush out the wild boar!
(*Dr Caius and Fenton enter, running.*)
Follow his tracks, his scent.
(*to Fenton*) You ferret
In the corridors.

BARDOLPH, PISTOL (*bursting into the room shouting, while Fenton runs to the left*) A-hunting we will go!

FORD (*to Bardolph and Pistol, pointing to the room on the right*)
Cut off his retreat!
Search in there!

(*Bardolph and Pistol rush into the room, brandishing their sticks.*)

ALICE (*affrontando Ford*) Sei tu dissennato?
Che fai?

FORD (*vede il cesto*) Chi c'è dentro quel cesto?

ALICE Il bucato.

FORD Mi lavi!! rea moglie! –
(*consegnando un mazzo di chiavi al Dr Cajus, che escirà correndo dall'uscio di sinistra*) Tu, piglia le chiavi,
Rivista le casse, va. –
(*rivolgendosi ancora ad Alice*) Ben tu mi lavi!
(*dà un calcio alla cesta*) Al diavolo i cenci! –
(*gridando verso il fondo*) Sprangatemi l'uscio
Del parco! –
(*Estrae furiosamente la biancheria dalla cesta, frugando e cerca di dentro, e disseminando i panni sul pavimento.*)
Camicie ... gonnelle ... – Or ti sguscio
Briccon! – Strofinacci! Via! Via! –
Cuffie rotte!
Ti sguscio ... Lenzuola ... berretti da notte ...
Non c'è ...
(*Rovescia la cesta.*)

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY (*guardando i panni sparsi*)
Che uragano!!

FORD (*correndo e gridando, esce dalla porta a sinistra*)
Cerchiam sotto il letto,
Nel forno, nel pozzo, nel bagno, sul tetto,
In cantina ...

ALICE È farnetico!

QUICKLY Cogliam tempo.

ALICE Troviamo
Modo com'egli esca.

MEG Nel panier.

ALICE No, là dentro
Non c'entra, è troppo grosso.

FALSTAFF (*sbalordito, ode le parole d'Alice, sbuca e corre alla cesta*)
Vediam; sì, c'entro, c'entro.

ALICE Corro a chiamare i servi.
(*Esce.*)

MEG (*a Falstaff, fingendo sorpresa*)
Sir John! Voi qui? Voi?

ALICE (*confronting Ford*) Are you out of your mind?
What are you doing?

FORD (*seeing the basket*) Who's in that basket?

ALICE Linen to be washed.

FORD Washing eh!! wicked wife! –
(*handing a bunch of keys to Dr Caius, who rushes out of the door*
on the left) You, take the keys,
Turn out the cupboards, go. –
(*turning back to Alice*) You're certainly washing for me!
(*kicking the basket*) To the devil with these rags! –
(*shouting to those outside*) Bolt the
Park gate! –
(*He furiously drags the laundry out of the basket, rummaging and searching inside, and strewing clothes all over the floor.*)
Shirts ... skirts ... – Now I'll wrinkle you out
You scoundrel! – Dusters! Away with you! Away! – Torn caps!
I'll dig you out ... Sheets ... nightcaps ...
He isn't there ...
(*He overturns the basket.*)

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY (*looking at the scattered laundry*)
What a hurricane!!

FORD (*running out of the door on the left, shouting*)
Let's look under the bed,
In the oven, in the well, in the bath, on the roof,
In the cellar ...

ALICE He's raving mad!

QUICKLY Let's take time.

ALICE Find
A way for him to escape.

MEG In the basket.

ALICE No, he can't
Get into it, he's too big.

FALSTAFF (*at his wit's end, hearing Alice's words, appearing and running to the basket*)
Let's see; yes, I can get in, I can get in.

ALICE I'll hurry to call the servants.
(*She goes out.*)

MEG (*to Falstaff, pretending to be surprised*)
Sir John! You here? You?

FALSTAFF (*entrando nella cesta*)

T'amo!

Amo te sola ... salvami! salvami!

QUICKLY (*a Falstaff, raccattando i panni*) Svelto!

MEG Lesto!

FALSTAFF (*accovacciandosi con grande sforzo nella cesta*)

Ahi! ... Ahi! ... Ci sto ... – Copritemi ...

QUICKLY (*a Meg*) Presto! colmiamo il cesto.

(*Fra tutte due con gran fretta ricacciano la biancheria nel cesto.*)

(*Meg e Quickly attendono a nascondere Falstaff sotto la biancheria mentre Nannetta e Fenton entrano da sinistra.*)

5. NANNETTA (*sottovoce, con cautela a Fenton*) Vien qua.

FENTON Che chiasso!

NANNETTA (*avviandosi al paravento: Fenton la segue*)

Quanti schiamazzi!

Segui il mio passo.

FENTON Casa di pazzi!

NANNETTA Qui ognun delira

Con vario error.

Son pazzi d'ira ...

FENTON E noi d'amor.

NANNETTA (*lo prende per mano, lo conduce dietro il paravento e vi si nascondono*)

Seguimi. Adagio.

FENTON Nessun m'ha scorto.

NANNETTA Tocchiamo il porto.

FENTON Siamo a nostr'agio.

NANNETTA Sta zitto e attento.

FENTON (*abbracciandola*) Vien sul mio petto!

NANNETTA Il paravento

Sia benedetto!

(*Nannetta e Fenton nascosti nel paravento. Mr Ford ed il Dr Cajus da sinistra, Bardolfo e Pistola da destra con gente del vicinato. Quickly e Meg accanto alla cesta dove c'è Falstaff nascosto. Poi ritornerà Alice dal fondo.*)

DR CAJUS (*urlando di dentro*) Al ladro!

FALSTAFF (*getting into the basket*)

I love you!

I love only you ... save me! save me!

QUICKLY (*to Falstaff, collecting up the laundry*) Hurry up!

MEG Be quick!

FALSTAFF (*forcing himself with a great effort into the basket*)

Oh! ... Oh! ... I'm in ... – Cover me up ...

QUICKLY (*to Meg*) Hurry! let's refill the basket.

(*Between them, with great haste, they stuff the linen back into the basket.*)

(*While Meg and Quickly are trying to hide Falstaff under the laundry Nannetta and Fenton enter from the left.*)

NANNETTA (*quietly and cautiously to Fenton*) Come here.

FENTON What a row!

NANNETTA (*making for the screen: Fenton follows her*)

Such a din!

Follow me.

FENTON It's a madhouse!

NANNETTA Here everyone is crazy

For different reasons.

They're mad with rage ...

FENTON And we with love.

NANNETTA (*taking him by the hand, leading him behind the screen where they hide*)

Follow me. Quietly.

FENTON No-one has seen me.

NANNETTA We're safe in port now.

FENTON We can rest easy.

NANNETTA Be quiet and pay attention.

FENTON (*embracing her*) Come to my heart!

NANNETTA May the screen

Be blessed!

(*Nannetta and Fenton, hidden by the screen. Ford and Dr Cajus enter from the left, Bardolph and Pistol with neighbours from the right. Quickly and Meg are near the basket where Falstaff lies hidden. Later, Alice returns at the back.*)

DR CAIUS (*shouting offstage*) Stop, thief!

FORD (*come sopra*) Al pagliardo!

DR CAJUS (*entra, traversando di corsa la sala*)

Squartatelo!

FORD (*come sopra*) Al ladro!

(*incontrando Bardolfo e Pistola che corrono da destra*) C'è?

PISTOLA No.

FORD (*a Bardolfo*) C'è?

BARDOLFO Non c'è, no.

FORD (*correndo, cercando e frugando nella cassapanca*)

Vada a sorquadro

La casa.

(*Bardolfo e Pistola escono da sinistra.*)

DR CAJUS (*dopo aver guardato nel camino*)

Non trovo nessuno.

FORD Eppure giuro

Che l'uomo è qua dentro. Ne sono sicuro!

Sicuro! Sicuro!

DR CAJUS Sir John! Sarò gaio

Quel di ch'io ti veda dar calci a rovaio!

FORD (*slanciandosi contro l'armadio e facendo sforzi per aprirlo*)

T'arrendi, furlante! T'arrendi!

O bombardò

Le mura!

DR CAJUS (*tenta aprire l'armadio colle chiavi*)

T'arrendi!

FORD Vien fuora! Codardo!

Sugliardo!

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA (*dalla porta di sinistra, di corsa*)

Nessuno!

FORD (*a Bardolfo e Pistola mentre continua a sforzare l'armadio col Dr Cajus*)

Cercatelo ancora!

(*Bardolfo e Pistola ritornano subito d'onde erano venuti.*)

T'arrendi! Scanfardo!

(*Riesce ad aprire l'armadio.*)

Non c'è!!

DR CAJUS (*aprendo a sua volta la cassapanca*) Vieni fuora!

Non c'è!

(*gira per la sala sempre cercando e frugando*)

Pappalardo! Beò! Bada a te!

FORD (*as before*) After the libertine!

DR CAIUS (*entering, and crossing the stage*)

Draw and quarter him!

FORD (*as before*) After the thief!

(*meeting Bardolph and Pistol who run in*) Is he there?

PISTOL No.

FORD (*to Bardolph*) Is he there?

BARDOLPH No, he's not.

FORD (*running about, searching everywhere and rummaging in the chest*) Go and turn

The house upside down.

(*Bardolph and Pistol leave to the left.*)

DR CAIUS (*having looked up the chimney*)

I can't find anyone.

FORD Yet I swear

That the man is somewhere here. I'm sure of it!

Positive! Certain!

DR CAIUS Sir John! I'll be glad

The day I see you hanged for your pains!

FORD (*hurling himself at a wardrobe and trying desperately to force it open*) Surrender, you villain! Surrender!

Or I'll bombard

The walls!

DR CAIUS (*trying to open the wardrobe with the keys*)

Surrender!

FORD Come out! Coward!

Filth!

BARDOLPH, PISTOL (*running in, from the door on the left*)

No-one!

FORD (*to Bardolph and Pistol, still trying to break open the wardrobe with Dr Caius*)

Keep on looking for him!

(*Bardolph and Pistol go back where they came from.*)

Surrender! You male harlot!!

(*He manages to open the wardrobe.*)

He's not here!!

DR CAIUS (*opening the chest-seat*) Come out!

No sign of him!

(*running round the room, searching at random*)

You glutton! Sot! Beware!

FORD *(come un ossesso aprendo il cassetto del tavolino)*
Scagnardo! Falsardo! Briccon!!

(Nannetta e Fenton sempre dietro il paravento si saran fatte moine durante il frastuono.)

NANNETTA, FENTON *(si danno un bacio sonoro nel posto del verso marcato dell'asterisco) (*)!*

(In questo punto è cessato il baccano e tutti sentono il susurro del bacio.)

6 **FORD** *(sottovoce, guardando il paravento)* C'è.

DR CAJUS *(come sopra)* C'è.
(Intorno al paravento)

FORD *(avviandosi piano e cautamente al paravento)*
Se t'agguanto!

DR CAJUS *(come sopra)* Se ti piglio!

FORD Se t'acciuffo!

DR CAJUS Se t'acceffo!

FORD Ti sconquasso!

DR CAJUS T'arronciglio
Come un can!

FORD Ti rompo il ceffo!

DR CAJUS Guai a te!

FORD Prega il tuo santo!

QUICKLY *(accanto all'cesta, a Meg)*

Facciamo le viste
D'attendere ai panni
Pur ch'ei non c'inganni
Con mosse imprevedute.
Finor non s'accose
Di nulla; egli può
Soprenderci forse,
Confonderci no.

DR CAJUS Guai a te! Guai!

FORD Guai se alfin con te m'azzuffo!
Se ti piglio!

MEG *(accanto alla cesta, a Quickly)*

Facciamogli siepe
Fra tanto scompiglio.
Ne' giuochi il periglio
È un grano di pepe

FORD *(wrenching open the table drawer like a madman)*
You mangy cur! Cheat! Rogue!!

(Nannetta and Fenton, behind the screen, have been exchanging tender endearments.)

NANNETTA, FENTON *(kissing each other audibly at the point marked with an asterisk) (*)!*

(At the moment the uproar ceases, everyone hears the sound of the kiss.)

FORD *(under his breath, staring at the screen)* He's there.

DR CAJUS *(as before)* He's there.
(Around the screen)

FORD *(quietly and cautiously approaching the screen)*
If I catch you!

DR CAJUS *(as before)* If I seize you!

FORD If I grab you!

DR CAJUS If I get hold of you!

FORD I'll smash you!

DR CAJUS I'll ensnare you
Like a stray dog!

FORD I'll beat your face in!

DR CAJUS Woe betide you!

FORD Pray to your saint!

QUICKLY *(by the basket to Meg)*

Let's keep up a show
of seeing to the washing,
so that he does not catch us out
by some unexpected move.
Up til now he's noticed
nothing; he may
perhaps surprise us,
but not confound us.

DR CAJUS If I catch you!

FORD You're in trouble if finally we come to blows!
If I catch you!

MEG *(by the basket, to Quickly)*

Let's hedge him off
from all this hubbub.
In games, danger
is like a dash of spice.

Il rischio è un diletto
Che accresce l'ardor,
Che stimola in petto
Gli spiriti e il cor.

DR CAJUS Se t'agguanto!

FORD Se t'acceffo!

DR CAJUS Se t'acciuffo!

BARDOLFO *(rientrando da sinistra)* Non si trova.

PISTOLA *(rientrando con alcuni del vicinato)*
Non si coglie.

FORD *(a Bardolfo, Pistola e loro compagni)*
Pssss ... Qua tutti.
(sottovoce con mistero, indicando il paravento)
L'ho trovato.
Là c'è Falstaff con mia moglie.

BARDOLFO Sozzo can vituperato!

FORD Zitto! Urlerei dopo.
Là s'è udito il suon d'un bacio.

PISTOLA, DR CAJUS Zitto!!

FALSTAFF *(sbucando colla faccia)* Affogo!

QUICKLY *(ricacciandolo giù)* Sta sotto.

MEG Or questi s'insorge.

QUICKLY *(abbassandosi e parlando a Falstaff sulla cesta)*
Se l'altro ti scorge
Sei morto.

BARDOLFO Noi dobbiam pigliare il topo
Mentre sta rodendo il cacio.

FALSTAFF *(rispondendo sotto la bianchiera)*
Son cotto!

MEG Sta sotto!

FORD Ragioniam.

FENTON *(a Nannetta)*

Bella! ridente!
Oh! Come pieghi
Verso i miei prieghi
Donnescamente!
Come ti vidi
m'innamorai
E tu sorridi
Perché lo sai

Risk is a pleasure,
that adds to its zest,
and rouses within us
our spirits and our hearts.

DR CAJUS If I catch hold of you!

FORD If I get my hands on you!

DR CAJUS If I catch hold of you!

BARDOLPH *(re-entering from the left)* We can't find him.

PISTOL *(re-entering with some of the neighbours)*
We can't catch him.

FORD *(to Bardolph, Pistol and their companions)*
Ssssh ... Come here, all of you.
(quietly, mysteriously, pointing to the screen)
I've found him.
Falstaff is there with my wife.

BARDOLPH Foul, damned dog!

FORD Quiet! You can shout afterwards.
We heard the sound of a kiss over there.

PISTOLA, DR CAJUS Zitto!!

FALSTAFF *(pushing his face out)* I'm suffocating!

QUICKLY *(thrusting him down again)* Get down.

MEG Now this one is rebelling.

QUICKLY *(leaning down and speaking to Falstaff in the basket)*
If the other man sees you
You're a dead man.

BARDOLPH We must catch the mouse
While he is nibbling the cheese.

FALSTAFF *(replying from under the washing)*
I'm roasted!

MEG Stay down!

Ford Let us think

FENTON *(to Nannetta)*

Lovely one! smiling girl!
Oh! how tenderly feminine
You are as you
Yield to my entreaties!
The moment I saw you
I fell in love with you,
And you smile
Because you know it.

NANNETTA (*a Fenton*)

Mentre quei vecchi
Corron la giostra
Noi di sottocchi
Corriam la nostra.
L'amor non ode
Tuon nè bufere,
Vola alle sfere
Beate e gode.

FORD Colpo non vibro
Senza un piano di battaglia.

GLI ALTRI Bravo.

DR CAJUS Un uom di quel calibro
Con un soffio ci sbaraglia.

FORD La mia tattica maestra
Le sue mosse pria registra.
(*a Pistola e a due compagni*)
Voi sarete l'ala destra,
(*a Bardolfo e al Dr Caius*)
Noi sarem l'ala sinistra
(*agli altri compagni*)
E costor con piè gagliardo
Sfonderanno il baluardo.

NANNETTA Lo spiritello!
D'amor, volteggia.

TUTTI GLI ALTRI Bravo, bravo generale!

DR CAJUS Aspettiamo un tuo segnale.

FALSTAFF (*sbucando*) Che caldo!

QUICKLY Sta sotto!

FALSTAFF Mi squaglio!

QUICKLY Sta sotto!

MEG Il ribaldo
Vorrebbe un ventaglio.

FALSTAFF (*supplicante, col naso fuori*)
Un breve spiraglio
Non chiedo di più.

QUICKLY Ti metto il bavaglio
Se parli.

MEG (*ricacciandolo sotto la biancheria*) Giù!

QUICKLY (*come sopra*) Giù!

NANNETTA (*to Fenton*)

While those old fogies
Run around
We follow suit
In secret.
Love does not hear
Thunder or gales,
It flies up to the blessed spheres
And delights in it.

FORD Let's ponder. I'm not striking a blow
Without a plan of battle.

THE OTHERS Bravo.

DR CAIUS A man of that girth
Can rout us with one puff.

FORD My master plan
Must first plot our moves.
(*to Pistol and two of his companions*)
You will be the right wing.
(*to Bardolph and Dr Caius*)
We shall be the left wing
(*to the others*)
And the others will boldly
Storm the bulwark.

NANNETTA The little sprite of love
Circles above us.

ALL THE OTHERS Bravo, bravo general!

DR CAIUS We'll wait for a sign from you.

FALSTAFF (*peering out*) The heat!

QUICKLY Stay down!

FALSTAFF I'm melting!

QUICKLY Stay down!

MEG The rascal
Would like a fan.

FALSTAFF (*begging, with his nose out*)
Just a crack to breathe through
That's all I ask.

QUICKLY I'll gag you
If you speak.

MEG (*pushing him back down under the linen*) Down!

QUICKLY (*as above*) Down!

7 NANNETTA Tutto delira,
Sospiro e riso.
Sorrìde il viso
E il cor sospira.

FENTON Fra quelle ciglia
Veggio due fari
A meraviglia
Sereni e chiari.

FORD (*al Dr Caius, accostando l'orecchio al paravento*)
Senti, accosta un po' l'orecchio!
Che patetici lamenti!!
Su quel nido d'usignuoli
Scoppierà fra poco il tuon.

BARDOLFO (*a Pistola*)
È la voce della donna
Che risponde al cavalier.

DR CAIUS (*a Ford, accostando l'orecchio al paravento*)
Sento, intendo e vedo chiaro
Delle femmine gl'inganni.

PISTOLA (*a Bardolfo*)
Ma fra poco il lieto gioco
Turberà dura lezion.
Egli canta, ma fra poco
Muterà la sua canzon.

GENTE DEL VICINATO
S'egli cade più non scappa
Nessun più lo può salvar.
Nel tuo diavolo t'incappa
Che tu possa stramazzar!

MEG (*a Quickly*)
Parliam sottovoce
Guardando il Messer
Che brontola e cuoce
Nel nostro panier.

QUICKLY (*a Meg*)
Costui s'è infardato
Di tanta viltà
Che darlo al bucato
È averne pietà.

NANNETTA Dolci richiami
D'amor.
Sì t'amo!

NANNETTA Everything is crazy,
Sighing and laughing.
My face smiles
And my heart sighs.

FENTON Between your lashes
I see two lights
Wonderfully
Calm and clear.

FORD (*to Dr Caius, putting his ear to the screen*)
Listen, put your ear closer!
What pathetic cries!!
The thunder will soon burst
On that nest of nightingales.

BARDOLPH (*to Pistola*)
It's the voice of the lady
Answering her cavalier.

DR CAIUS (*to Ford, putting his ear to the screen*)
I hear, I understand and plainly see
The deceits of women.

PISTOL (*to Bardolph*)
But soon a hard lesson
Will upset their merry game.
He's singing, but before long
He'll change his tune.

NEIGHBOURS
If he falls, he'll never escape
Nobody can ever save him.
Hurry to meet your devil
May you come a cropper!

MEG (*to Quickly*)
Let's speak softly
As we watch this gentleman
Who's grumbling and roasting
In our basket.

QUICKLY (*to Meg*)
This one has soiled himself
With so much cowardice
That to give him a good wash
Is to take pity on him.

NANNETTA Sweet voices
Of love
Yes I love you!

FENTON Dimmi se m'ami!
T'amo!

FORD (*agli altri*)
Zitto! A noi! Quest'è il momento.
Zitto! Attenti! Attenti a me.

FALSTAFF (*sbucando e sbuffando*) Ouff! ... Cesto molesto!
Protesto!
Portami via!

ALICE (*che è rientrata e si sarà avvicinata alla cesta*)
Silenzio!

MEG, QUICKLY Che bestia restia!

DR CAJUS Dà il segnal.

FALSTAFF Aiuto! aiuto! aiuto

FORD Uno ... Due ... Tre ...

(*Rovesciano il paravento.*)

DR CAJUS Non è lui!!

FORD (*ravvisando sua figlia con Fenton*)
Sbalordimento!

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY È il finimondo!

FORD (*a Nannetta, con furia*) Ancor nuove rivolte! –
(*a Fenton*) Tu va pe' fatti tuoi!
L'ho detto mille volte:
Costei non fa per voi.

(*Nannetta sbigottita fugge e Fenton esce dal fondo.*)

BARDOLFO (*correndo verso il fondo*)
È là! Ferma!

FORD Dove?

PISTOLA (*correndo*) Là!

BARDOLFO (*correndo*) Là! sulle scale.

FORD Squartatelo!

PISTOLA, BARDOLFO, DR CAJUS, I COMPAGNI
A caccia!

QUICKLY Che caccia infernale!

(*Tutti gli uomini salgono a corsa la scala del fondo.*)

ALICE (*scampanellando*)
Ned! Will! Tom! Isaac! Su! Presto! Presto!

FENTON Say if you love me!
I love you!

FORD (*to the others*)
Quiet! All together! This is the moment.
Silence! Stand by! Pay attention to me.

FALSTAFF (*surfacing and puffing*) Oh! ... Dreadful basket!
I protest!
Take me away!

ALICE (*who has come in again and approached the basket*)
Silence!

MEG, QUICKLY What a restless beast!

DR CAJUS Give the signal.

FALSTAFF Help! Help! Help!

FORD One ... Two ... Three ...

(*They overturn the screen.*)

DR CAJUS It's not him!!

FORD (*recognizing his daughter with Fenton*)
What a shock!

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY It's the end of the world!

FORD (*furiously, to Nannetta*) So you've rebelled again! –
(*to Fenton*) You go about your business!
I've told you a thousand times:
This girl is not for you.

(*Nannetta runs off, dismayed, and Fenton leaves at the rear.*)

BARDOLPH (*running towards the centre backstage*)
There he is! Stop!

FORD Where?

PISTOL (*running*) There!

BARDOLPH (*running*) There! on the stairs.

FORD Cut him to pieces!

PISTOL, BARDOLPH, DR CAJUS, CAMPANIONS
A-hunting we will go!

QUICKLY What a hellish hunt!

(*All the men run up the stairs at the back.*)

ALICE (*ringing a bell*)
Ned! Will! Tom! Isaac! Here! Quickly! Quickly!

(*Nannetta rientra con quattro servi e un paggetto.*)
Rovesciate quel cesto
Dalla finestra nell'acqua del fosso ...
Là! presso alle giuncaie
Davanti al crocchio delle lavandaie.

TUTTE Sì, sì, sì, sì!

NANNETTA (*ai servi, che s'affaticano a sollevare la cesta*)
C'è dentro un pezzo grosso.

ALICE (*al paggetto, che poi esce dalla scala nel fondo*)
Tu chiama mio marito;
(*a Meg, mentre Nannetta e Quickly stanno a guardare i servi che avranno sollevato la cesta*)
Gli narremo il nostro caso pazzo.
Solo al vedere il Cavalier nel guazzo
D'ogni gelosa ubbia sarà guarito.

QUICKLY (*ai servi*) Pesa!

ALICE, MEG (*ai servi, che sono già vicini alla finestra*)
Coraggio!

NANNETTA Il fondo ha fatto «crac»!

NANNETTA, MEG, QUICKLY Su!

ALICE (*la cesta è portata in alto*) Trionfo!

TUTTE Trionfo!
Ah! Ah!

ALICE Che tonfo!

NANNETTA, MEG Che tonfo!

(*La cesta, Falstaff e la biancheria capitombolano giù dalla finestra.*)

TUTTI Patatrac!

(*Gran grido e risata di donne dall'esterno: immensa risata di Alice, Nannetta, Meg e Quickly. Ford e gli altri uomini rientrano: Alice vedendo Ford lo piglia per un braccio e lo conduce rapidamente alla finestra.*)

(*Nannetta re-enters with four servants and a page-boy.*)
Empty that basket
Out of the window into the river ...
There! near the bed of bulrushes
In front of that bunch of washerwomen.

ALL Yes, yes, yes, yes!

NANNETTA (*to the servants, who are striving to lift the basket*)
There's a big wig in there.

ALICE (*to the page, who runs out by the stairs at the back*)
You go and call my husband here;
(*to Meg, while Nannetta and Quickly watch the servants who have succeeded in lifting the basket*)
We'll tell him our crazy tale.
Just to see the knight in the water
Will cure him of all jealous fancies.

QUICKLY (*to the servants*) It's heavy!

ALICE, MEG (*to the servants, who are now near the window*)
Come on!

NANNETTA The bottom went 'crack'!

NANNETTA, MEG, QUICKLY Up with it!

ALICE (*as the basket is lifted high*) Victory!

ALL Victory!
Ha! Ha!

ALICE What a splash!

NANNETTA, MEG What a splash!

(*The basket, Falstaff and the washing tumble out of the window.*)

ALL Pa-ta-trac!

(*There is a great shout of laughter from the women outside: wild laughter from Alice, Nannetta, Meg and Quickly. Ford and the other men re-enter: seeing Ford, Alice takes him by the arm and leads him swiftly to the window.*)

ATTO TERZO, parte prima

UN PIAZZALE.

A destra, l'esterno dell'Osteria della Giarrettiera coll'insegna e il motto: «Honi soit qui mal y pense». Una panca di fianco al portone. – È l'ora del tramonto.

(Falstaff, poi l'Oste.)

FALSTAFF (seduto sulla panca, meditando. – Poi si scuote, dà un gran pugno sulla panca e rivolto verso l'interno dell'osteria chiama l'Oste)

[8] Ehi! Taverniere!

(ritorna meditando)

Mondo ladro. – Mondo rubaldo.

Reo mondo!

Taverniere: un bicchier di vin caldo.

(L'Oste dall'osteria, riceve l'ordine e rientra.)

Io, dunque, avrò vissuto tant'anni, audace e destro Cavaliere, per essere portato in un canestro
E gittato al canale co' pannolini biechi,
Come si fa coi gatti e i catellini ciechi.
Ché se non galleggiava per me quest'epa tronfia
Certo affogavo. – Brutta morte. –
L'acqua mi gonfia.
Mondo reo. – Non c'è più virtù. – Tutto declina.

[9] Va, vecchio John, va, va per la tua via; cammina
Finchè tu muoia. – Allor scomparirà la vera
Virilità dal mondo.
Che giornataccia nera!
M'aiuti il ciel! – Impinguo troppo. – Ho dei peli grigi.

(Ritorna l'Oste portando su d'un vassoio un gran bicchiere di vino caldo. Mette il bicchiere sulla panca e rientra all'osteria.)

Versiamo un po' di vino nell'acqua del Tamigi.
(Beve sorseggiando e assaporando. Si sbottona il panciotto, si sdraia, ribeve a sorsate, rianimandosi poco a poco.)
Buono. – Ber del vin dolce e sbottonarsi al sole,
Dolce cosa! – Il buon vino sperde le tette fole
Dello sconforto, accende l'occhio e il pensier, dal labbro
Sale al cervel e quivi risveglia il picciol fabbro
Dei trilli; a negro grillo che vibra entro l'uom brillo.

ACT III, Part one

A SQUARE

On the right, the exterior of the Garter Inn with its sign and the motto: 'Honi soit qui mal y pense'. There is a bench by the doorway. – It is sunset.

(Falstaff, then the innkeeper.)

FALSTAFF (seated on the bench, meditating. – Then he stirs himself, beats on the bench with his fist, and, turning towards the interior of the inn, summons the innkeeper)

Ho there! Innkeeper!

(resuming his meditation)

Thieving world. – Villainous world.

Wicked world!

Landlord: a tankard of mulled wine.

(The innkeeper comes out of the inn, takes the order and goes back inside.)

I, then, have lived so many years as a daring and adroit Knight, only to be borne off in a basket
And thrown into the water with ghastly linen,
As they do with cats and their blind kittens.
If this swollen belly had not floated for me
I should certainly have drowned. – An awful death. –
I'm bloated with water.
Wicked world. – There is no more virtue. – All is in decline.

Go, old John, go, go on your way; tramp on
Until you die. – Then true manhood will have vanished
From the world.
What a horrible black day!
Heaven help me! – I'm getting too fat. – I have some grey hairs.

(The landlord returns with a large tankard of mulled wine. – He puts it on the bench and goes back into the inn.)

Let's pour a little wine into the Thames water.
(He sips, savouring the wine. He unbuttons his waistcoat, and drinks again, gradually recovering his good humour.)
Good. – To drink fine wine and relax in the sun,
Is pleasant! – Good wine dispels sombre fancies
Of depression, brightens eye and mind, from the lips
It rises to the brain and there awakens the little fashioner
Of trills; a black cricket that chirps inside the tipsy man.

Trilla ogni fibra in cor, l'allegro etere al trillo
Guizza e il giocondo globo squilibra una demenza
Trillante! E il trillo invade il mondo!!! ...

(Falstaff, Mrs Quickly. – Poi nel fondo Alice, Nannetta, Meg, Mr Ford, Dr Cajus e Fenton.)

[10] **QUICKLY** (inchinandosi e interrompendo Falstaff)
Reverenza.
La bella Alice ...

FALSTAFF (alzandosi e scattando)

Al diavolo te con Alice bella!

Ne ho piene le bisaccie! Ne ho piene le budella!

QUICKLY Voi siete errato ...

FALSTAFF Un canchero!! Sento ancor le cornate

Di quell'irco geloso! Ho ancor l'ossa arrembate

D'esser rimasto curvo, come una buona lama

Di Bilbao, nello spazio d'un panierin di dama!

Con quel tufo! – E quel caldo! –

Un uom della mia tempra,

Che in uno stillicidio continuo si distempra!

Poi, quando fui ben cotto, rovente, incandescente,

M'han tuffato nell'acqua. Canaglie!!!

(Alice, Meg, Nannetta, Mr Ford, Dr Cajus, Fenton sbucano dietro una casa, o l'uno o l'altro spiando non visti da Falstaff e poi si nascondono, poi tornano a spiare.)

QUICKLY Essa è innocente.
Prendete abbaglio.

FALSTAFF Vattene!!

QUICKLY (infervorata)

La colpa è di quei fanti

Malaugurati! Alice piange, urla, invoca i santi.

Povera donna! V'ama. Leggete.

(Estrae di tasca una lettera. Falstaff la prende e si mette a leggere.)

ALICE (nel fondo sottovoce agli altri, spiando)
(Legge.)

FORD (sottovoce) (Legge.)

NANNETTA (Vedrai che ci ricasca.)

ALICE (L'uomo non si corregge.)

MEG (ad Alice) (Nasconditi.)

DR CAJUS (Rilegge.)

Every fibre in the heart throbs, the merry air flashes at the trill
And a trilling madness unbalances the cheerful world
And the trill invades the world!!! ...

(Falstaff, Mistress Quickly. – Then at the rear, Alice, Nannetta, Meg, Ford, Dr Caius and Fenton.)

QUICKLY (curtseying and interrupting Falstaff)
My respects.
The lovely Alice ...

FALSTAFF (rising, with an angry outburst)

To the devil, you and lovely Alice!

I've had enough of you! A bellyful!

QUICKLY You are mistaken ...

FALSTAFF A pox on you!! I can still feel the horns
Of that jealous goat! My bones are still aching
From having been bent, like a good Bilbao
Blade, in the narrow space of a woman's linen basket!
With all that stench! – And that heat! –
A man of my character,
Melting away in a continuous trickle!
Then, when I was well-roasted, red-hot, incandescent,
They dumped me into the water. The rascals!!!

(Alice, Meg, Nannetta, Ford, Dr Caius and Fenton peep out from behind a house, then first one, then another, unseen by Falstaff, spies on him, hides, then returns to spy.)

QUICKLY She is innocent.
You are making a mistake.

FALSTAFF Be off with you!!

QUICKLY (heatedly)

It was the fault of those wretched

Servants! Alice weeps, cries out, prays to her saints.

Poor lady!! She loves you. Read this.

(She takes a letter from her pocket. Falstaff takes it and begins to read it.)

ALICE (at the back, quietly to the others, spying)
(He's reading.)

FORD (quietly) (He's reading.)

NANNETTA (You'll see that he'll fall into the trap again.)

ALICE (Men never learn.)

MEG (to Alice) (Hide.)

DR CAJUS (He's reading it again.)

FORD (Rilegge. – L'esca inghiotte.)

FALSTAFF (*rileggendo ad alta voce e con molta attenzione*)
«T'aspetterò nel parco Real, a mezzanotte.
Tu verrai travestito da Cacciatore nero
Alla quercia di Herne.»

QUICKLY Amor ama il mistero.
Per rivedervi, Alice, si val d'una leggenda
Popolar. Quella quercia è un luogo da tregenda.
Il Cacciatore nero s'è imposto ad un suo ramo.
V'ha chi crede vederlo ricomparir ...

FALSTAFF (*rabbonito prende per un braccio Quickly e s'avvia per entrare con essa nell'osteria*) Entriamo.
Là si discorre meglio. Narrami la tua frasca.

QUICKLY (*incominciando il racconto della leggenda con mistero, entra nell'osteria con Falstaff*)
Quando il rintocco della mezzanotte ...

(Alice, Meg, Nannetta, Mr Ford, Dr Caius, Fenton. Poi Mrs Quickly.)

FORD (*dal fondo che avrà seguita la mossa di Falstaff*)
Ci casca.

Alice (*avanzandosi con tutto il crocchio, comicamente e misteriosamente ripigliando il racconto di Mrs Quickly*)
Quando il rintocco della mezzanotte
Cupo si sparge nel silente orror,
Sorgon gli spirti vagabondi a frotte
E vien nel parco il nero Cacciatore.
Egli cammina lento, lento, lento,
Nel gran letargo della sepoltura.
S'avanza livido ...

NANNETTA Oh! che spavento!

MEG Sento già il brivido della paura!

Alice (*con voce naturale*)
Fandonie che ai bambini
Raccontan le nonne
Con lunghi preamboli,
Per farli dormir.

Alice, NANNETTA, MEG Vendetta di donne
Non deve fallir.

Alice (*ripigliando il racconto*)
S'avanza livido e il passo converge
Al tronco ove esalò l'anima prava.
Sbucan le Fate. – Sulla fronte egli erge
Due corna lunghe, lunghe, lunghe ...

FORD (He's reading it again. – He's swallowing the bait.)

FALSTAFF (*rereading the letter aloud, with great concentration*)
'I'll expect you in the royal park, at midnight.
You will come disguised as the Black Huntsman
To Herne's oak.'

QUICKLY Love loves mystery.
Alice is making use of a popular legend to see you again.
That oak is the place of a witches' sabbath.
The Black Huntsman hanged himself from one of its branches.
Some people believe they've seen him reappear there ...

FALSTAFF (*pacified, taking Quickly by the arm and escorting her towards the inn*) Let's go in.
We can converse better there. Tell me your tale.

QUICKLY (*beginning the tale of the legend with an air of mystery, entering the inn with Falstaff*)
When the stroke of midnight ...

(Alice, Meg, Nannetta, Ford, Dr Caius, Fenton. Then Quickly.)

FORD (*from the rear following Falstaff's movement*)
He's falling for it.

Alice (*advancing with the group, comically imitating Quickly's mysterious tone and continuing her story*)
When the stroke of midnight
Resounds darkly in the horrible silence,
Roaming spirits rise in swarms
And the Black Huntsman enters the park.
He walks slowly, so slowly, so slowly,
In the deep slumber of the grave.
He advances, ashen pale ...

NANNETTA Oh! how frightening!

MEG Already I feel the shudder of fear!

Alice (*in a natural voice*)
Fairy tales that grandmothers
Tell children
With long descriptions,
To make them go to sleep.

Alice, NANNETTA, MEG Our women's revenge
Must not fail.

Alice (*resuming the tale*)
He advances, ashen pale and his steps converge
On the tree-trunk where he gave up his wicked soul.
The fairies appear. – From his brow
Rise two long, long, long horns ...

FORD Brava!
Quelle corna saranno la mia gioia!

ALICE (*a Ford*) Bada! tu pur ti meriti
Qualche castigo!

FORD Perdona. Riconosco i miei meriti.

ALICE Ma guai se ancor ti coglie
Quella mania feroce
Di cercar dentro il guscio d'una noce
L'amante di tua moglie.
Ma il tempo stringe e vuol fantasia lesta.

MEG Affrettiam.

FENTON Concertiam la mascherata.

ALICE Nannetta!

NANNETTA Eccola qua!

ALICE (*a Nannetta*) Sarai la Fata
Regina delle Fate, in bianca vesta
Chiusa in candido vel, cinta di rose.

NANNETTA E canterò parole armoniose.

ALICE (*a Meg*) Tu la verde sarai Ninfa silvana,
E la comare Quickly una befana.

(*Scende la sera, la scena si oscura.*)

NANNETTA A meraviglia!

Alice Avrò con me dei putti
Che fingeran folletti,
E spiritelli
E diavoletti
E pipistrelli
E farfarelli.
Su Falstaff camuffato in manto e corni
Ci scaglieremo tutti.
E io tempesteremo
Finch'abbia confessata
La sua perversità.
Poi ci smaschereremo
E, pria che il ciel raggiorni,
La giuliva brigata
Se ne ritornerà.

NANNETTA Vien sera.

MEG Rincasiam.

ALICE L'appuntamento
È alla quercia di Herne.

FORD Bravo!
Those horns will be my joy!

ALICE (*to Ford*) Take care! you too deserve
Some kind of punishment!

FORD Forgive me. I recognize my failings.

ALICE But woe betide you if you ever yield
Again to that ferocious madness
Of looking inside a nutshell
For your wife's lover.
But time presses and requires swift imagination.

MEG Let's hurry.

FENTON Let's arrange the masquerade.

ALICE Nannetta!

NANNETTA Here I am!

ALICE (*to Nannetta*) You are to be the Fairy
Queen of the Fairies, in a white dress
Covered by a white veil, and girded with roses.

NANNETTA And I'll sing harmonious words.

ALICE (*to Meg*) You will be the green wood nymph,
And Mistress Quickly a witch.

(*Night falls, bringing darkness.*)

NANNETTA Wonderful!

Alice I'll have little children with me
To act as elves,
And sprites
And little devils
And bats
And imps.
We'll all hurl ourselves on Falstaff in his cloak
And horns.
And we'll thrash him
Until he has confessed
His perversity.
Then we'll unmask
And, before daybreak,
Our merry troop
Will return.

NANNETTA It's getting dark.

MEG Let's go home.

ALICE The appointment
Is at Herne's oak.

FENTON È inteso.

NANNETTA A meraviglia!
Oh! che allegro spavento!

ALICE, NANNETTA, FENTON (scambievolmente) Addio.

MEG (a Nannetta e Alice) Addio.

(Alice, Nannetta, Fenton si avviano per uscire da sinistra – Meg da destra.)

ALICE (sul limitare a sinistra, gridando a Meg che sarà già avviata ad andarsene da destra) Provvedi le lanterne.

MEG Sì.

(Alice, Nannetta, Fenton escono da destra: in questo momento Mrs Quickly esce dall'osteria e vedendo Ford e il Dr Caius che parlano, sta ad origliare sulla soglia.)

FORD (al Dr Caius, parlandogli segretamente, vicino all'osteria) Non temer, tu sposerai mia figlia.
Rammenti bene il suo travestimento?

DR CAIUS Cinta di rose, il vel bianco e la vesta.

ALICE (di dentro a sinistra gridando)
Non ti scordar le maschere.

MEG (di dentro a destra gridando) No, certo.
Nè tu le raganelle!

FORD (continuando il discorso al Dr Caius)
Io già disposi
La rete mia. Sul finir della festa
Verrete a me col volto ricoperto
Essa da un vel, tu da un mantel fratesco
E vi benedirò come due sposi.

DR CAIUS (prendendo il braccio di Ford ed avviandosi ad escire da sinistra) Siam d'accordo.

QUICKLY (sul limitare dell'osteria con gesto accorto verso i due che escono) (Stai fresco!)
(Esce rapidamente da destra.)
(di dentro a destra gridando e sempre più allontanandosi)
Nannetta! Ohè! Nannetta!
Nannetta! Ohè!

NANNETTA (di dentro a sinistra, allontanandosi)
Che c'è? Che c'è?

QUICKLY (come sopra) Prepara la canzone della Fata.

NANNETTA (come sopra) È preparata.

FENTON Agreed.

NANNETTA Wonderful!
Oh! what fun and fear!

ALICE, NANNETTA, FENTON (to each other) Farewell.

MEG (to Nannetta and Alice) Farewell.

(Alice, Nannetta, Fenton go off to the left – Meg to the right.)

ALICE (far left, calling to Meg, who is already offstage right)
You provide the lanterns.

MEG Yes.

(Alice, Nannetta, Fenton go off to the right: at the same time Quickly comes out of the inn and, seeing Ford and Dr Caius talking, remains in the doorway to listen.)

FORD (to Dr Caius, speaking in a low voice, close to the inn)
Don't fret, you shall marry my daughter.
Do you remember her disguise?

DR CAIUS Girded with roses, white robe and veil.

ALICE (calling from offstage left)
Don't forget the masks.

MEG (calling from offstage right) Certainly not.
Nor you the rattles!

FORD (continuing his conversation with Dr Caius)
I've already spread
My net. At the end of the merriment
You'll come to me with covered faces
She in a veil, and you in a friar's cowl
And I shall bless you as man and wife.

DR CAIUS (taking Ford's arm and starting to leave to the left)
We're agreed.

QUICKLY (at the inn door, making a sly gesture at the pair as they leave) (You're in trouble!)
(She hurries off to the right.)
(calling from offstage right, moving ever further away)
Nannetta! Ho there! Nannetta!
Nannetta! Ho there!

NANNETTA (offstage left, moving away)
What is it? What is it?

QUICKLY (as before) Practise your Fairy song.

NANNETTA (as before) It it ready.

ALICE (di dentro a sinistra) Tu, non tardar.

QUICKLY (come sopra, più lontana)
Chi prima arriva, aspetta.

ATTO TERZO, parte seconda

IL PARCO DI WINDSOR.

Nel centro, la gran quercia di Herne. Nel fondo, l'argine d'un fosso. Fronde foltissime. Arbusti in fiore. È notte.

Si odono gli appelli lontani dei guardia-boschi. – Il parco a poco a poco si rischiarerà coi raggi della luna.

(Fenton, poi Nannetta vestita da Regina delle Fate. Alice, non mascherata portando sul braccio una cappa e in mano una maschera. Mrs Quickly in gran cuffia e manto grigio da befana, un bastone e un brutto ceffo di maschera in mano. Poi, Meg, vestita con dei veli verdi e mascherata.)

FENTON
Dal labbro il canto estasiato vola
Pe' silenzi notturni e va lontano
E alfin ritrova un altro labbro umano
Che gli risponde colla sua parola.

Allor la nota che non è più sola
Vibra di gioia in un accordo arcano
E innamorando l'aer antelucano
Con altra voce al suo fonte rivola.

Quivi ripiglia suon, ma la sua cura
Tende sempre ad unir chi lo disuna.
Così baciai la disiatà bocca!

«Bocca baciata non perde ventura.»

NANNETTA (di dentro, lontana e avvicinandosi)
«Anci rinnova come fa la luna.»

FENTON (slanciandosi verso la parte dove udi la voce)
Ma il canto muor nel bacio che lo tocca.
(Fenton vede Nannetta che entra e l'abbraccia.)

ALICE (dividendo Fenton da Nannetta e obbligandolo a vestire la cappa nera)
Nossignore! – Tu indossa questa cappa.

ALICE (offstage left) Don't be late.

QUICKLY (as before, far off)
The first to arrive must wait.

ACT III, Part two

WINDSOR GREAT PARK.

Herne's oak stands in the centre. The banks of a ditch are seen in the background. There is thick foliage. Shrubs are in bloom. It is night.

The distant calls of forest wardens are heard. – The park is gradually lit up by the rays of the moon.

(Fenton, then Nannetta dressed as the Fairy Queen. Alice, not masked, carrying a cloak over her arm and a mask in her hand. Quickly is in the tall hat and grey mantle of a witch and carries a broomstick and a frightful mask. Then Meg, veiled in green and masked.)

FENTON
From my lips my ecstatic song flies
Afar through the silent night
And finally finds other human lips
That reply with the same word.

Then the note that is no longer alone
Thrills with joy in a secret accord
And filling the air before dawn with love
Flies back to its source with another voice.

There it renews the sound, but its concern
Always tends to unite whoever disunites it.
Thus I kissed the desired mouth!

'The mouth that is kissed is never unlucky.'

NANNETTA (offstage, distant and approaching)
'Instead it revives like the moon.'

FENTON (hurrying to where he heard the voice)
But the song dies in the kiss that touches it.
(He sees Nannetta and embraces her.)

ALICE (parting Fenton from Nannetta and making him don the black cloak)
No sirl – You put on this cloak.

FENTON *(aiutato da Alice e Nannetta ad indossare la cappa)*
Che vuol dir ciò?

NANNETTA *(aggiustandogli il cappuccio)* Lasciati fare.

ALICE *(porgendo la maschera a Fenton)* Allaccia.

NANNETTA *(rimirando Fenton)*
È un fraticel sgusciato dalla Trappa.

ALICE *(alle compagne)*
Il tradimento che Ford ne minaccia
Tornar deve in suo scorno e in nostro aiuto.

FENTON Spiegatevi.

ALICE Ubbidisci presto e muto.
L'occasione come viene scappa.
(a Mrs Quickly)
Chi vestirai da finta sposa?

QUICKLY Un gaio
Ladron nasuto
Che aborre il Dottor Cajo.

MEG *(accorrendo dal fondo, ad Alice)*
Ho nascosto i folletti lungo il fosso.
Siam pronte.

ALICE *(origliando)* Zitto. – Viene il pezzo grosso.
Via! ...

(Tutte fuggono con Fenton da sinistra.)

(Falstaff con due corna di cervo in testa e avvolto in un ampio mantello. Poi Alice. Poi Meg. Mentre Falstaff entra in scena suona la mezzanotte.)

FALSTAFF
Una, due, tre, quattro, cinque, sei, sette botte,
Otto, nove, dieci, undici, dodici. – Mezzanotte.
Quest'è la quercia. – Numi, proteggeremmi! – Giove!
Tu per amor d'Europa ti trasformasti in bove;
Portasti corna. – I numi c'insegnan la modestia.
L'amore metamorfosa un uom in una bestia.
(ascoltando)

[15] Odo un soave passo!
(Alice compare nel fondo.)
Alice! Amor ti chiama!
(avvicinandosi ad Alice)
Vieni! l'amor m'infiamma!

ALICE *(avvicinandosi a Falstaff)* Sir John!

FALSTAFF Sei la mia dama!

FENTON *(helped by Alice and Nannetta to put the cloak on)*
What is this for?

NANNETTA *(adjusting the cowl)* Do as you are told.

ALICE *(giving Fenton the mask)* Fix this on.

NANNETTA *(studying Fenton)*
He's a young friar who's slipped away from La Trappe.

ALICE *(to her companions)*
The betrayal with which Ford threatens us
Must be turned against him to our advantage.

FENTON Explain yourself.

ALICE Obey quickly and silently.
Chance vanishes as rapidly as it comes.
(to Quickly)
Whom are you going to disguise as the bogus bride?

QUICKLY A merry
Long-nosed thief
Who detests Dr Caius.

MEG *(running in from the back, to Alice)*
I've hidden the elves along the ditch.
We're ready.

ALICE *(listening closely)* Quiet. – Here comes the big man.
Away! ...

(They all rush off with Fenton to the left.)

(Falstaff enters, with a pair of antlers on his head and wrapped in an ample cloak. Then Alice. Then Meg. Midnight sounds as Falstaff comes on stage.)

FALSTAFF
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven strokes,
Eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. – Midnight.
This is the oak. – Gods, protect me! – Jupiter!
You, for love of Europa turned yourself into a bull;
You wore horns. – The gods teach us modesty.
Love transforms a man into a beast.
(listening)

I hear a soft footstep!
(Alice appears at the rear.)
Alice! Love calls you!
(approaching Alice)
Come! love is setting me afire!

ALICE *(approaching Falstaff)* Sir John!

FALSTAFF You are my lady!

ALICE Sir John!

FALSTAFF *(afferrandola)* Sei la mia damma!

ALICE O sfavillante amor!

FALSTAFF *(attirandola a sè con ardore)*
Vieni! Già fremo e fervo!

ALICE *(sempre evitando l'abbraccio)* Sir John!

FALSTAFF Sono il tuo servo!
Sono il tuo cervo imbizzarrito. Ed or
Piovan tartufi, rafani, finocchi!!!
E sien la mia pastura!
E amor trabocchi!
Siam soli ...

ALICE No. Qui nella selva densa
Mi segue Meg.

FALSTAFF È doppia l'avventura!
Venga anche lei! Squatatermi
Come un camoscio a mensa!!
Sbranatemi!!! – Cupido
Alfin mi ricompensa!
Io t'amo! t'amo!

MEG *(di dentro)* Aiuto!!!

ALICE *(fingendo spavento)* Un grido!
Ahimè!

MEG *(dal fondo senza avanzare – non ha la maschera)*
Vien la tregenda!
(Fugge.)

ALICE *(come sopra)* Ahimè! Fuggiamo!

FALSTAFF *(spaventato)* Dove?

ALICE *(fuggendo da destra rapidissimamente)*
Il cielo perdoni al mio peccato!

FALSTAFF *(appiattendosi accanto al tronco della quercia)*
Il diavolo non vuol ch'io sia dannato.

[16] **NANNETTA** *(di dentro)*
Ninfe! Elfi! Silfi! Doridi! Sirene!
L'astro degli incantesimi in cielo è sorto.
(Compare nel fondo fra le fronde.)
Sorgete! Ombre serene!

VOCI DI DONNE *(lontano)* Ninfe! Silfi! Sirene!

FALSTAFF *(gettandosi colla faccia contro terra, lungo disteso)* Sono le Fate. Chi le guarda è morto.

ALICE Sir John!

FALSTAFF *(clapping her)* You are my doe!

ALICE Oh resplendent love!

FALSTAFF *(passionately embracing her)*
Come! Already I'm quivering and burning!

ALICE *(avoiding his embrace)* Sir John!

FALSTAFF I am your servant!
I am your frisky stag. And now
Let it rain truffles, radishes, fennel!!!
They shall be my fodder!
And let love overflow!
We are alone ...

ALICE No. Here in the thick of the forest
Meg is following me.

FALSTAFF The adventure is doubled!
Let her come too! Quarter me
Like chamois venison at table!!
Tear me apart!!! – Cupid
At last recompenses me!
I love you! I love you!

MEG *(offstage)* Help!!!

ALICE *(feigning fear)* A cry!
Alas!

MEG *(at the rear, not coming forward – without a mask)*
The witches' coven is coming!
(She flees.)

ALICE *(as before)* Alas! Let us fly!

FALSTAFF *(frightened)* Whither?

ALICE *(rushing off to the right)*
Heaven forgive me my sin!

FALSTAFF *(flattening himself against the trunk of the oak)*
The devil will not see me damned.

NANNETTA *(offstage)*
Nymphs! Elves! Sylphs! Dryads! Sirens!
The star of magic spells has risen in the sky.
(She appears at the back among the leafy trees.)
Arise! Serene shades!

WOMEN'S VOICES *(afar)* Nymphs! Sylphs! Sirens!

FALSTAFF *(throwing himself full length face down on the ground)* It's the fairies. Whoever looks at them dies.

(Nannetta vestita da Regina della Fate. Meg da Ninfa verde, colla maschera. Mrs Quickly da befana, mascherata. Alice colla maschera. Bardolfo in cappa rossa, senza maschera, col cappuccio calato. Pistola da satiro. Il Dr Cajus in cappa grigia, senza maschera. Fenton in cappa nera, mascherato. Mr Ford senza cappa, nè maschera. Ragazzette vestite da Fate bianche e da Fate azzurre. Altre Fate e Ninfe, Spiritelli, Diavoli. Falstaff sempre a terra colla faccia rivolta verso il suolo, immobile.)

(Le piccole Fate si dispongono in cerchio intorno alla loro Regina. Le Fate più grandi formano un secondo cerchio. Tutti gli uomini un crocchio a destra e le donne un crocchio a sinistra.)

ALICE (con alcune Fate) Inoltriam

NANNETTA (con altre Fate) Egli è là.

ALICE (Scorge Falstaff e lo indica alle altre)
Steso ai suoi

NANNETTA Lo confonde
Il terror.

LE FATE Si nasconde

ALICE Non ridiam!
(Esce.)

LE FATE Non ridiam!

NANNETTA (indica alle Fate il loro posto)
Tutte qui, dietro a me.
Cominciam.

LE FATE Tocca a te.

LA REGINA DELLE FATE (NANNETTA)

Sul fil d'un soffio etesio
Scorrete, agili larve,
Fra i rami un baglior cesio
D'alba lunare apparve.
Danzate! e il passo blando
Misuri un blando suon,
Le magiche accoppiando
Carole alla canzon.

LE FATE

La selva dorme e sperde
Incenso ed ombra; e par
Nell'aer denso un verde
Asilo in fondo al mar.

LA REGINA DELLE FATE
Erriam sotto la luna

(Nannetta disguised as the Fairy Queen. Meg as a green nymph, masked. Quickly as a masked witch. Alice, masked. Bardolph in a red cloak, unmasked, with the cowl lowered. Pistol as a satyr. Dr Cajus in a grey cloak, unmasked. Fenton in a black cloak, masked. Ford with no cloak or mask. Little girls dressed as white fairies and blue fairies. More fairies and nymphs, elves and imps. Falstaff remains motionless on the ground, with his face to the downwards.)

(The little fairies form a circle round their Queen. The bigger fairies form a second circle. All the men in a group on one side and the women on the other.)

ALICE (with some fairies) Let's go forward

NANNETTA (with other fairies) There he is.

ALICE (seeing Falstaff and pointing him out to the others)
Stretched out on the ground

NANNETTA He's terrified
Out of his senses

FAIRIES He's hiding

ALICE We mustn't laugh
(She leaves)

FAIRIES Don't let's laugh

NANNETTA (showing the fairies their places)
All you here, behind me.
Let's begin.

FAIRIES You begin

QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES (NANNETTA)

On the thread of a summer breeze
Glide, you agile shadows,
Through the boughs a blue gleam
Of lunar dawn has appeared.
Dance on! and let your gentle steps
Scan a gentle sound,
Matching magic
Dance to song.

FAIRIES

The forest sleeps and dispenses
Incense and shadow; and it seems
In the dense air a green
Haven at the bottom of the sea.

QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES
Let us wander under the moon

Scegliendo fior da fiore,
Ogni corolla in core
Porta la sua fortuna.
Col gigli e le viole
Scriviam de' nomi arcani,
Dalle fatate mani
Germogliano parole.
Parole alluminate
Di puro argento e d'ôr,
Carmi e magie. Le Fate
Hanno per cifre i fiori.

LE FATE (mentre le piccole Fate vanno cogliendo fiori)

Moviamo ad una ad una
Sotto il lunare albor,
Verso la quercia bruna
Del nero Cacciatore.

(Tutte le Fate colla Regina mentre cantano si avviano lentamente verso la quercia.)

BARDOLFO (intoppando nel corpo di Falstaff e arrestando tutti
17 con un gesto) Alto là!

PISTOLA (accorrendo) Chi va là?

FALSTAFF Pietà!

QUICKLY (toccando Falstaff col bastone) C'è un uomo!

ALICE, MEG, NANNETTA C'è un uom!

LE FATE Un uom!

FORD (che sarà accorso vicino a Falstaff)
Cornuto come un bue!

PISTOLA Rotondo come un pomo!

BARDOLFO Grosso come una nave!

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA (toccando Falstaff col piede)
Alzati, olà!

FALSTAFF (alzando la testa) Portatemi una grue!
Non posso.

FORD È troppo grave.

QUICKLY È corrotto!

LE FATE È corrotto!

ALICE, MEG, NANNETTA È impuro!

LE FATE È impuro!

Choosing flower from flower,
Each corolla carries
In its heart its own fortune.
Let's write secret names
With lilies and violets,
From our enchanted hands
Let words blossom.
Words illuminated
In pure silver and gold,
Lyrical poems and magic spells. The fairies
Have flowers as cyphers.

FAIRIES (while the little fairies are picking flowers)

Let us move one by one
Beneath the dawn light of the moon,
Towards the dark oak tree
Of the Black Huntsman.

(As they sing, all the fairies, with their Queen, make their way slowly towards the oak.)

BARDOLFO (tripping over Falstaff's body and stopping the procession with a gesture) Halt where you are!

PISTOL (hurrying to the spot) Who goes there?

FALSTAFF Have mercy!

QUICKLY (prodding Falstaff with her broomstick) It's a man!

ALICE, MEG, NANNETTA It's a man!

FAIRIES A man!

FORD (who has come up close to Falstaff)
Horned like an ox!

PISTOL As round as an apple!

BARDOLFO As big as a ship!

BARDOLFO, PISTOL (nudging Falstaff with their feet)
You there, get up!

FALSTAFF (raising his head) Bring me a crane!
I can't.

FORD He's too heavy.

QUICKLY He's corrupt!

FAIRIES He's corrupt!

ALICE, MEG, NANNETTA He's impure!

FAIRIES He's impure!

BARDOLFO *(con dei gran gesti da stregone)*
Si faccia lo sconjuro!

ALICE *(in disparte a Nannetta, mentre il Dr Caius s'aggira come chi cerca qualcuno. Fenton e Quickly nascondono Nannetta colle loro persone.)*

(Evita il tuo periglio. Già il Dottor Cajo ti cerca.)

NANNETTA *(Troviamo un nascondiglio.)*
(S'avvia con Fenton nel fondo della scena, protetta da Alice e da Quickly.)

QUICKLY *(Poi tornerete lesti al mio richiamo.)*

BARDOLFO
(continuando i gesti di scongiuro sul corpo di Falstaff)
Spirite!!! Folletti!
Farfarelli! Vampiri! Agili insetti
Del palude infernale! Punzecchiato!
Orticheggiatelo!
Martirizzatelo
Coì grifi aguzzi!
(Accorrono velocissimi alcuni ragazzi vestiti da folletti, e si scagliano su Falstaff.)

FALSTAFF *(a Bardolfo)* Ahimè! tu puzzi
Come una puzza.

FOLLETTI
(addosso a Falstaff spingendolo e facendolo ruzzolare)
Ruzzola, ruzzola, ruzzola, ruzzola!

ALICE, QUICKLY, MEG

Pizzica, pizzica,
Pizzica, stuzzica,
Spizzica, spizzica,
Pungi, spilluzzica,
Finch'egli abbàì!

FALSTAFF Ahì! Ahì! Ahì! Ahì!

FOLLETTI, DIAVOLI
Scrolliam crepitacoli,
Scarandole e nacchere!
Di schizzi e di zacchere
Quei!l'otre sì macoli.
Meniam scorribandole,
Danziamo la tresca,
Treschiam le faràndole
Sull'ampia ventresca.
Zanzàre ed assilli

BARDOLPH *(making signs like a wizard)*
Let's perform an exorcism!

ALICE *(aside to Nannetta, while Dr Caius roams about as if looking for someone. Fenton and Quickly hide Nannetta by standing in front of her.)*

(Avoid your peril. Dr Caius is already seeking you.)

NANNETTA *(Let's find a hiding place.)*
(She goes with Fenton to the rear, protected by Alice and Quickly.)

QUICKLY *(Then you must come back quickly when I call.)*

BARDOLPH
(still gesticulating over Falstaff's body)
Sprites! Imps!
Goblins! Vampires! Nimble insects
From the marsh of hell! Bite him!
Sting him!
Torment him
With your sharp-pointed snouts!
(Some small boys dressed as imps quickly come running up and jump on Falstaff.)

FALSTAFF *(to Bardolph)* Ah! you stink
Like a polecat.

IMPS
(all over Falstaff, shoving him to make him roll about)
Roll and tumble, roll and tumble!

ALICE, QUICKLY, MEG

Pinch him, pinch him,
Pinch him, goad him,
Peck him, peck him,
Sting him, prick him,
Until he howls!

FALSTAFF Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

IMPS, DEVILS
Let's shake rattles,
Clappers and castanets!
Bespatter the old wineskin
With splashes of mud.
We'll lead the raid on him,
We'll dance a jig,
Weaving farandoles
On his huge belly.
Mosquitos and gadflies

Volate alla lizza
Coì dardi e gli spilli!
Ch'ei crepi di stizza!

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY

Pizzica, pizzica,
Pizzica, stuzzica,
Spizzica, spizzica,
Pungi, spilluzzica,
Finch'egli abbàì!

FALSTAFF Ahì! Ahì! Ahì! Ahì!

FOLLETTI
Cozzalo, aizzalo,
Dai piè al cocuzzolo!
Strozzalo, strizzalo!
Gli svampi l'uzzolo!
Pizzica, pizzica, l'unghia rintuzzola!
Ruzzola, ruzzola, ruzzola, ruzzola!

(Fanno ruzzolare Falstaff verso il proscenio.)

DR CAIUS, FORD Cialtroni!

PISTOLA, BARDOLFO
Poltron!
Ghiotton!

TUTTI GLI UOMINI
Pancioni!
Beòn!
Briccon!
In ginocchio!
(Lo alzano in quattro e lo obbligano a star ginocchioni.)

FORD Pancia ritronfia!

ALICE Guancia rigonfia!

BARDOLFO Sconquassa-letti!

QUICKLY Spacca-farsetti!

PISTOLA Vuota-barili!

MEG Sfonda-sedili!

DR CAIUS Sfianca-giumenti!

FORD Triplice mento!

BARDOLFO, PISTOLA Di' che ti penti!

(Bardolfo prende il bastone di Quickly e dà una bastonata a Falstaff.)

Fly into battle
With your darts and your needles!
Let him die of rage!

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY

Pinch him, pinch him,
Pinch him, goad him,
Peck him, peck him,
Sting him, prick him,
Until he howls!

FALSTAFF Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

IMPS
Ram him, goad him,
From top to toes!
Strangle him, squeeze him!
Until his desire is quenched!
Pinch him, pinch him, blunt your claws!
Roll and tumble him, roll and tumble him!

(They roll Falstaff downstage.)

DR CAIUS, FORD Rascal!

PISTOL, BARDOLPH
Poltroon!
Glutton!

ALL THE MEN
Big-belly!
Drunkard!
Scoundrel!
On your knees!
(The four of them force him him up on to his knees.)

FORD Bloated paunch!

ALICE Puffed-up cheeks!

BARDOLPH Bed-breaker!

QUICKLY Doublet-splitter!

PISTOL Cask-drainer!

MEG Chair-smasher!

DR CAIUS Pack-horse destroyer!

FORD Triple chin!

BARDOLPH, PISTOL Say you repent!

(Bardolph takes Quickly's broomstick and beats Falstaff with it.)

FALSTAFF Ah! Ah! mi pento!

TUTTI Uom frodolento!

FALSTAFF Ah! Ah! mi pento!

TUTTI Uom turbolento!

FALSTAFF Ah! Ah! mi pento!

GLI UOMINI Capron!
Scrocon!
Spaccon!

FALSTAFF Perdon!

BARDOLFO (*colla faccia vicinissima alla faccia di Falstaff*)
Riforma la tua vita!

FALSTAFF Tu puti d'acquavita.

TUTTE LE DONNE Domine fallo casto!

FALSTAFF Ma salvagli l'addomine.

LE DONNE Domine fallo guasto!

FALSTAFF Ma salvagli l'addomine.

LE DONNE Fallo punito Domine!

FALSTAFF Ma salvagli l'addomine.

LE DONNE Fallo pentito Domine!

FALSTAFF Ma salvagli l'addomine.

DR CAJUS, FORD, BARDOLFO, PISTOLA Globo d'impurità!
Rispondi.

FALSTAFF Ben mi sta.

DR CAJUS, FORD, BARDOLFO, PISTOLA Monte d'obesità!
Rispondi.

FALSTAFF Ben mi sta.

DR CAJUS, FORD, BARDOLFO, PISTOLA Otre di malvasia!
Rispondi.

FALSTAFF Così sia.

BARDOLFO Re dei panciuti!

FALSTAFF Va via, tu puti.

BARDOLFO Re dei cornuti!

FALSTAFF Va via, tu puti.

TUTTI (*Pistola gli dà un colpo di frustra*) Furfanteria!

FALSTAFF Oh! Oh! I repent!

ALL Fraudulent man!

FALSTAFF Oh! Oh! I repent!

ALL Riotous man!

FALSTAFF Oh! Oh! I repent!

MEN He-goat!
Scrounger!
Braggart!

FALSTAFF Forgive me!

BARDOLPH (*with his face very close to Falstaff's*)
Reform your life!

FALSTAFF You reek of brandy.

ALL THE WOMEN Lord make him chaste!

FALSTAFF But save his abdomen.

THE WOMEN Lord, shatter him!

FALSTAFF But save his abdomen.

THE WOMEN Lord, punish him!

FALSTAFF But save his abdomen.

THE WOMEN Make him repent, Lord!

FALSTAFF But save his abdomen.

DR CAIUS, FORD, BARDOLPH, PISTOL Globe of impurity!
Reply.

FALSTAFF I deserve it.

DR CAIUS, FORD, BARDOLPH, PISTOL Mountain of obesity!
Reply.

FALSTAFF I deserve it.

DR CAIUS, FORD, BARDOLPH, PISTOL Wineskin of Malmsey!
Reply.

FALSTAFF So be it.

BARDOLPH King of the pot-bellied!

FALSTAFF Get away, you stink.

BARDOLPH King of cuckolds!

FALSTAFF Get away, you stink.

ALL (*Pistol gives him a blow from frustration*) Rascality!

FALSTAFF Ah! Così sia.

TUTTI Gagliofferia!

FALSTAFF Ah! Così sia.

BARDOLFO

Ed or che il diavolo ti porta via!!!
(Nella foga del dire gli casca il cappuccio.)

FALSTAFF (*rialzandosi*)
Nitro! Catrame e solfo!!!
Riconosco Bardolfo!
(*violentissimamente contro Bardolfo*)

Naso vermiglio!
Naso-bargiglio!
Puntùta lesina!
Vampa di resina!
Salamandra! Ignis fatuus! Vecchia alabarda! Stecca
Di sartore! Schidion d'inferno! Aringa secca!
Vampiro! Basilisco!
Manigoldo! Ladrone!
Ho detto. E se mentisco
Voglio che mi si spacchi il cinturone!!!

TUTTI Bravo!

FALSTAFF Un poco di pausa. – Sono stanco.

QUICKLY (*che si trova vicino a Bardolfo, gli dice a bassa voce*) (Vieni. Ti coprirò col velo bianco.)

(*Mentre il Dr Caius ricomincia a cercare e cercando esce, dalla parte opposta, Quickly e Bardolfo scompaiono dietro gli alberi del fondo.*)

FORD (*con un inchino ironico, avvicinandosi a Falstaff*)
Ed or, mentre vi passa la scalmana,
Sir John, dite: il cornuto
Chi è?

ALICE, MEG (*che si saranno avvicinate, ironicamente a Falstaff smascherandosi*) Chi è?

ALICE Vi siete fatto muto?

FALSTAFF (*dopo un primo istante di sbalordimento andando incontro a Ford*) Caro signor Fontana!

ALICE (*interponendosi*)
Errate nel saluto.
Questo è Ford, mio marito.

FALSTAFF Oh! So be it.

ALL Boorishness!

FALSTAFF Oh! So be it.

BARDOLPH

And now may the devil spirit you away!!!
(*With the vigour of his delivery his cowl falls back.*)

FALSTAFF (*rising*)
Saltpetre! Pitch and sulphur!!!
I recognize Bardolph!
(*violently to Bardolph*)

Scarlet nose!
Wattle nose!
Pointed awl!
Flaming resin!
Salamander! Will o' the wisp! Antique halberd! Tailor's Rod!
Hell's roasting-spit! Dried herring!
Vampire! Basilisk!
Assassin! Robber!
I have spoken. And if I lie
May my sword-belt split in two!!!

ALL Bravo!

FALSTAFF A short pause. – I'm weary.

QUICKLY (*finding Bardolph, to whom she speaks in a low voice*) (Come. I'll cover you with the white veil.)

(*Meanwhile Dr Caius again begins to search and goes out on opposite sides, Quickly and Bardolph disappear behind the trees at the back.*)

FORD (*with an ironic bow approaching Falstaff*)
And now, while you recover,
Sir John, tell me: who is
The cuckold?

ALICE, MEG (*ironically to Falstaff as they approach, unmasking*) Who is he?

ALICE Have you been struck dumb?

FALSTAFF (*after a moment of bewilderment, going over to Ford*) Dear Master Brook!

ALICE (*coming between them*)
You have the wrong form of address.
This is Ford, my husband.

QUICKLY (*ritornando*) Cavaliero...

FALSTAFF Reverenza

QUICKLY Voi credeste due donne così grulle,
Così citrulle,
Da darsi anima e corpo all'Avversiero,
Per un uom vecchio, sudicio ed obeso ...

MEG, QUICKLY Con quella testa calva ...

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY E con quel peso!

FORD Parlan chiaro.

FALSTAFF Incomincio ad accorgermi
D'esser stato un somaro.

ALICE E un cervo ...

FORD E un bue.

TUTTI (*ridendo*) Ah! Ah!

FORD E un mostro raro!

FALSTAFF (*che avrà riacquistata la sua calma*)

[19] Ogni sorta di gente dozzinale
Mi beffa e se ne gloria:
Pur, senza me, costor con tanta boria
Non avrebbero un briciolo di sale.
Son io che vi fa scalliri.
L'arguzia mia crea l'arguzia degli altri.

TUTTI Ma bravo!

FORD Per gli Dei!
Se non ridessi ti sconquasserei!
Ma basta. – Ed or vo' che m'ascoltiate.
Coronerem la mascherata bella
Cogli sponsali della
Regina delle Fate.

(*Il Dr Cajus e Bardolfo, vestito da Regina delle Fate col viso coperto da un velo, s'avanzano tenendosi per mano. Il Dr Cajus ha la maschera sul volto.*)

[20] Già s'avanza la coppia degli sposi.
Attenti!

TUTTI (*tranne Ford*) Attenti!

FORD Eccola in bianca vesta
Col velo e il serto delle rose in testa
E il fidanzato suo ch'io le disposi.
Circondatela, o Ninfe.

QUICKLY (*returning*) Sir Knight...

FALSTAFF Your humble servant

QUICKLY You thought two women could be
So silly, so addle-pated
As to give themselves body and soul to the Devil,
For the sake of an old, dirty, fat man ...

MEG, QUICKLY With that bald head ...

ALICE, MEG, QUICKLY And with all that weight!

FORD They speak plainly.

FALSTAFF I'm beginning to see
That I've been made an ass.

ALICE And a stag ...

FORD And an ox.

ALL (*laughing*) Ha! Ha!

FORD And a rare monster!

FALSTAFF (*who has regained his composure*)

Every kind of vulgar oaf
Mocks me and glories in it:
Yet, without me, these people for all their arrogance
Wouldn't have an ounce of wit.
I'm the one who makes you wily.
My wit creates the wit of others.

ALL Bravo!

FORD By the gods!
If I weren't laughing I'd destroy you!
But enough. – And now I want you to listen to me.
We'll crown this fine masquerade
With the nuptials of
The Fairy Queen.

(*Dr Caius and Bardolph, dressed as the Fairy Queen, his face covered by a veil, come forward, holding hands. Dr Caius is masked.*)

Here comes the bridal couple now.
Attention!

ALL (*except Ford*) Attention!

FORD Here she is, dressed in white,
With a veil and a wreath of roses on her head
And her betrothed whom I chose for her.
O nymphs, surround her.

(*Dr Cajus e Bardolfo si collocano nel mezzo: le Fate grandi e piccole li circondano.*)

ALICE (*presentando Nannetta e Fenton entrati da pochi istanti. Nannetta ha un gran velo celeste e fitto che la copre tutta. Fenton ha la maschera e la cappa.*)

Un'altra coppia
D'amanti desiosi
Chiede d'essere ammessa agli augurosi
Connubi!

FORD E sia. Farem la festa doppia.

Avvicinate i lumi.
(*I folletti guidati da Alice si avvicinano colle loro lanterne.*)
Il ciel v'accoppia.
(*Ford è davanti alle due coppie.*)

(*Alice prenderà in braccio il più piccolo dei ragazzetti che sarà mascherato da spiritello, e farà in modo che la lanterna che tiene in mano illumini in pieno la faccia di Bardolfo appena questi resterà senza il velo che lo nasconde. Un altro spiritello guidato da Meg illuminerà Nannetta e Fenton.*)

Giù le maschere e i veli. – Apoteòsi!

(*Al comando di Ford, rapidamente Fenton e il Dr Cajus si tolgono la maschera. Nannetta si toglie il velo e Quickly toglie il velo a Bardolfo: tutti rimangono a viso scoperto.*)

TUTTI (*ridendo, tranne Ford, il Dr Cajus e Bardolfo*)

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

DR CAIUS (*riconoscendo Bardolfo, immobilizzato dalla sorpresa*) Spavento!

FORD Tradimento!

GLI ALTRI (*ridendo*) Apoteòsi!

FORD (*guardando l'altra coppia*)
Fenton con mia figlia!!

DR CAIUS Ho sposato Bardolfo!!

TUTTI (*tranne il Dr Cajus e Ford*) Ah! Ah!

DR CAIUS Spavento!

LE DONNE Vittoria!

TUTTI (*tranne Cajus e Ford*) Evviva! Evviva!

FORD (*ancora sotto il colpo dello stupore*) Oh! meraviglia!

ALICE (*avvicinandosi a Ford*)
L'uom cade spesso nelle reti ordite
Dalle malizie sue.

(*Dr Caius and Bardolph are in the centre: large and small fairies surround them.*)

ALICE (*presenting Nannetta and Fenton, who have just reappeared. Nannetta is wearing a thick blue veil which covers her completely. Fenton is in his cloak and wears a mask.*)

Another pair
Of longing lovers
Asks to be admitted to the happy
Rites!

FORD So be it. We'll have a double wedding.

Bring the lanterns.
(*The elves, guided by Alice, come closer with their lanterns.*)
Heaven unites you.
(*Ford stands before the two couples.*)

(*Alice takes in her arms the smallest boy who is disguised as an elf and sees that the lantern he is holding in his hand will clearly light up Bardolph's face when his veil is removed. Another elf, guided by Meg, will light up Nannetta and Fenton.*)

Off with your masks and veils. – Transformation!

(*At Ford's command, Fenton and Dr Caius rapidly unmask. Nannetta removes her veil and Quickly unveils Bardolph: everyone is unmasked.*)

ALL (*laughing, except Ford, Dr Caius and Bardolph*)

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

DR CAIUS (*recognizing Bardolph, rooted to the spot with surprise*) How dreadful!

FORD I am betrayed!

THE OTHERS (*laughing*) Transformation!

FORD (*seeing the other couple*)
Fenton with my daughter!!

DR CAIUS I've married Bardolph!!

ALL (*except Dr Caius and Ford*) Ha! Ha!

DR CAIUS How dreadful!

THE WOMEN Victory!

ALL (*except Dr Caius and Ford*) Hurrah! Hurrah!

FORD (*still reeling with surprise*) Oh! I'm quite bewildered!

ALICE (*coming up to Ford*)
A man often falls into the snares set
By his own malicious cunning.

FALSTAFF (*avvicinandosi a Ford con un inchino ironico*)

Caro buon Messer Ford, ed ora, dite:

Lo scornato chi è?

FORD (*accenna al Dr Cajus*) Lui.

DR CAJUS (*accenna a Ford*) Tu.

FORD No.

DR CAJUS Sì.

BARDOLFO (*accenna a Dr Cajus e al Ford*) Voi.

FENTON (*accenna pure a Ford e Dr Cajus*) Lor.

DR CAJUS (*mettendosi con Ford*) Noi.

FALSTAFF Tutti e due.

ALICE (*mettendo Falstaff con Ford e Dr Cajus*)

No. Tutti e tre.

(*a Ford mostrando Nannetta e Fenton*)

Volgiti e mira quell'ansie leggiadre.

NANNETTA (*a Ford giungendo le mani*) Perdonateci padre.

FORD Chi schivare non può la propria noia

L'accetti di buon grado.

Facciamo il parentado

E che il ciel vi dia gioia.

TUTTI (*tranne Dr Cajus*) Evviva!

FALSTAFF

Un coro e terminiam la scena.

FORD E poi con Sir Falstaff, tutti, andiamo a cena.

TUTTI (*tranne Ford*) Evviva!

TUTTI

Tutto nel mondo è burla.

L'uom è nato burlone,

La fede in cor gli ciurla,

Gli ciurla la ragione.

Tutti gabbàti! Irride

L'un l'altro ogni mortal,

Ma ride ben chi ride

La risata final.

(*Cala la tela.*)

FALSTAFF (*approaching Ford with an ironic bow*)

Dear good Master Ford, and now, tell me:

Who's been made to look foolish?

FORD (*pointing to Dr Caius*) He has.

DR CAIUS (*pointing to Ford*) You have.

FORD No.

DR CAIUS Yes.

BARDOLPH (*pointing to Ford and Dr Caius*) Both of you.

FENTON (*also pointing to Ford and Dr Caius*) They have.

DR CAIUS (*joining Ford*) We have.

FALSTAFF Both of you.

ALICE (*placing Falstaff with Ford and Dr Caius*)

No. All three of you.

(*to Ford, indicating Nannetta and Fenton*)

Turn and look upon their sweet longing for each other.

NANNETTA (*to Ford, joining hands*) Forgive us, father.

FORD He who cannot avoid his own upsets

Should accept them in good part.

We'll approve the marriage

And may Heaven grant you joy.

ALL (*except Dr Caius*) Hurrah!

FALSTAFF

A chorus and we'll bring our comedy to an end.

FORD And then with Sir John let's all go to supper.

ALL (*except Ford*) Hurrah!

ALL

The whole world is a jest.

Man is born a jester,

His reason in his brain

Always vacillates.

We are all mocked! Each mortal

Laughs at all the others,

But he laughs best

Who laughs last.

(*The curtain falls.*)



Michele Pertusi Sir John Falstaff

Michele Pertusi regularly sings major roles in works such as Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Verdi's *Oberto*, with the world's leading conductors including Barenboim, Chailly, Chung, Davis, Gatti, Jurowski, Levine and Mehta. He made London debuts with the Royal Opera in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and with the LSO in *La Damnation de Faust*. The performances with the LSO and Sir Colin Davis feature on an acclaimed recording issued on the LSO Live label. He first sang *Falstaff* in Bologna and participated in the celebrations for the reopening of the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. He is a regular guest of the Teatro alla Scala and Metropolitan Opera in New York, where he has appeared in such operas as *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Cenerentola*, *Così fan tutte* and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Michele Pertusi chante régulièrement les rôles principaux d'ouvrages comme *Les Noces de Figaro* de Mozart, *La Cenerentola* de Rossini, *Lucia di Lammermoor* de Donizetti et *Oberto* de Verdi, avec les chefs les plus renommés sur la scène internationale, tels Barenboim, Chailly, Chung, Davis, Gatti, Jurowski, Levine et Mehta. Il a fait ses débuts londoniens à l'Opéra royal de Covent Garden dans *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* d'Offenbach et avec le LSO dans *La Damnation de Faust* de Berlioz. Les exécutions de cet ouvrage avec le LSO et Sir Colin Davis ont débouché sur un enregistrement paru sous le label LSO Live et largement salué. Il a abordé le rôle de *Falstaff* à Bologne et participé aux festivités accompagnant la réouverture du Théâtre de la Fenice, à Venise. Régulièrement invité par la Scala de Milan et le Metropolitan Opera de New York, il s'y est produit dans des opéras comme *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Cenerentola*, *Così fan tutte* et *Les Noces de Figaro*.

Michele Pertusi singt regelmäßig Hauptrollen in solchen Werken wie Mozarts *Le nozze di Figaro*, Rossinis *La Cenerentola*, Donizettis *Lucia di Lammermoor* und Verdis *Oberto* unter den führenden Dirigenten der Welt einschließlich Barenboim, Chailly, Chung, Davis, Gatti, Jurowski, Levine und Metha. In London trat er zum ersten Mal in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* im Royal Opera House (Covent Garden) und in *La Damnation de Faust* mit dem London Symphony Orchestra auf. Die Aufführungen mit dem LSO unter Sir Colin Davis wurden auf einer preisgekrönten CD festgehalten, die beim LSO Live-Label erschien. Den *Falstaff* sang Michele Pertusi zum ersten Mal in Bologna. Auch an den Feierlichkeiten zur Wiedereröffnung des Teatro La Fenice in Venedig nahm Michele Pertusi teil. Er erschien regelmäßig als Gast im Teatro alla Scala und der Metropolitan Opera di New York, wo er in solchen Opern wie *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La Cenerentola*, *Così fan tutte* und *Le nozze di Figaro* zu hören war.



Carlos Alvarez Ford

Carlos Alvarez was born in Malaga and studied Medicine before enrolling at the Conservatory and starting singing lessons with Alfonso García Leoz in 1990. He regularly performs in the world's most renowned theatres such as the Vienna State Opera, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Salzburg Festival, Teatro alla Scala, Covent Garden and Madrid's Teatro Real. He has received many important awards, including: Cultural Work Award (Government of Andalusia), a Grammy Award, Cannes Classical Award, Spain's National Gold Medal, Gold Medal for Artistic Achievements awarded by the Government of Andalusia, Spain, Milan's Opera magazine best baritone of 2002, and the National Musical Award 2002 from the Spanish Ministry of Culture.

Né à Málaga, Carlos Alvarez a étudié la médecine avant d'entrer au Conservatoire et de prendre des cours de chant avec Alfonso García Leoz en 1990. Il se produit régulièrement sur les scènes les plus prestigieuses du monde entier, tels la Staatsoper de Vienne, le Metropolitan Opera de New York, le Festival de Salzbourg, la Scala de Milan, Covent Garden à Londres et le Teatro Real de Madrid. Il a reçu de nombreuses récompenses, notamment le Prix de l'Œuvre culturelle du gouvernement d'Andalousie, un Grammy Award, un prix classique à Cannes, la Médaille d'or nationale d'Espagne, la Médaille d'or du mérite artistique du gouvernement d'Andalousie, une désignation comme meilleur baryton de l'année par le magazine milanais Opera en 2002 et le Prix musical national 2002 du ministère espagnol de la Culture.

Carlos Alvarez wurde in Málaga geboren und studierte vorerst Medizin, bevor er 1990 am Konservatorium mit Gesangsunterricht bei Alfonso García Leoz begann. Regelmäßig tritt Carlos Alvarez auf den bekanntesten Bühnen der Welt auf wie z.B. in der Wiener Staatsoper, der Metropolitan Opera in New York, bei den Salzburger Festspielen, im Teatro alla Scala, Royal Opera House (Covent Garden) und Teatro Real Madrid. Er erhielt zahlreiche wichtige Auszeichnungen. Dazu gehören die von der Regierung Andalusiens verliehenen Preise Premio a la Labor Cultural und die Medalla de Oro für Verdienste in der Kunst, ein Grammy, ein Cannes Classical Award, eine von der spanischen Regierung verliehene Medalla de Oro de Bellas Artes und den vom spanischen Kulturministerium verliehenen Premio Nacional de Música 2003. Von der in Milan herausgegebenen Musikzeitschrift Ópera wurde Carlos Alvarez zum besten Bariton 2002 gewählt.



Bülent Bezdüz Fenton

Bülent Bezdüz was born in Turkey and graduated from the Music Academy of Gazi University in Ankara, before studying at the European Opera Centre in Manchester, with whom he made his debut in the title role of Mozart's *Lucio Silla*. After completing his studies in Marseille he joined the State Opera in Mersin where his roles included Rodolfo (*La bohème*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) and Duca (*Rigoletto*). He sang in Gianni Schicchi at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam conducted by Riccardo Chailly and *Les Troyens* with the LSO and Sir Colin Davis in 2000. The subsequent recording of *Les Troyens* has won two Grammy Awards and a Gramophone Award. He will shortly debut at Teatro Regio di Parma, Teatro Regio di Torino and Teatro alla Scala.

Bülent Bezdüz est né en Turquie et a fait ses études à l'Académie de musique de l'Université Gazi d'Ankara, avant d'étudier à l'European Opera Centre de Manchester, avec lequel il a fait ses débuts dans le rôle titre de *Lucio Silla* de Mozart. Après s'être perfectionné à Marseille, il a été engagé par l'Opéra d'Etat de Mersin, dans son pays natal, où il a incarné notamment Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) et le Duc (*Rigoletto*). Il a chanté Gianni Schicchi au Concertgebouw d'Amsterdam sous la direction de Riccardo Chailly et *Les Troyens* avec le LSO et Sir Colin Davis en 2000. L'enregistrement *des Troyens* qui a résulté de ces concerts a remporté deux Grammy Awards et un Gramophone Award. Bülent Bezdüz fera prochainement ses débuts au Teatro Regio de Parme, au Teatro Regio de Turin et à la Scala de Milan.

Bülent Bezdüz wurde in der Türkei geboren und schloss sein Musikstudium an der Musikakademie der Gazi Üniversitesi in Ankara ab, bevor er am European Opera Centre in Manchester studierte, wo er seinen ersten Auftritt in der Titelrolle von Mozarts *Lucio Silla* hatte. Nach seinem Studienabschluss in Marseille erhielt er eine Anstellung an der Mersin Devlet Opera (Türkei), wo Rudolf (*La Bohème*), Sir Edgard (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) und der Herzog von Mantua (*Rigoletto*) zu seinen Rollen zählten. Er sang in Gianni Schicchi im Concertgebouw in Amsterdam unter der Leitung von Riccardo Chailly und 2000 in *Les Troyens* mit den London Symphony Orchestra unter Sir Colin Davis. Die daraus resultierende CD von *Les Troyens* erhielt zwei Grammy-Preise und einen Gramophone-Preis. Bülent Bezdüz wird in Kürze auch erstmalig am Teatro Regio di Parma, Teatro Regio di Torino und Teatro alla Scala auftreten.



Rob Moore

Alasdair Elliott Dr Cajus

Alasdair Elliott has sung roles including Mime for Scottish Opera, Pong (*Turandot*) for the Teatro Real, Madrid and the Royal Opera, David (*Die Meistersinger*) for Staatstheater Stuttgart and Monostatos (*The Magic Flute*) in Lisbon and London. He also regularly sings with the English National Opera, Opera Zuid, Monteverdi Choir and English Concert. He is well-known for his interest in contemporary music and has sung Vova in Schnittke's *Life with an Idiot* for English National Opera and Scottish Opera, as well as The Servant in the world premiere of John Buller's

The Bacchae.

Alasdair Elliott a chanté des rôles comme Mime au Scottish Opera, Pong (*Turandot*) au Teatro Real de Madrid et à Covent Garden, David (*Les Maîtres chanteurs*) au Staatstheater de Stuttgart et Monostatos (*La Flûte enchantée*) à Lisbonne et Londres. Par ailleurs, il se produit régulièrement avec l'English National Opera, l'Opera Zuid de Maastricht, le Monteverdi Choir et l'English Concert. Il s'est fait connaître grâce à son intérêt pour la musique contemporaine et a chanté Vova dans *Vie avec un idiot* de Schnittke à l'English National Opera et au Scottish Opera, ainsi que le Serviteur lors de la création mondiale des *Bacchantes* de John Buller.

Zu den von Alasdair Elliott gesungenen Rollen gehören der Mime für die Scottish Opera, Pong (*Turandot*) für das Teatro Real Madrid und das Royal Opera House (Covent Garden), David (*Die Meistersinger*) für das Staatstheater Stuttgart und Monostatos (*Die Zauberflöte*) in Lisabon und London. Alasdair Elliott singt auch regelmäßig an der English National Opera, der Opera Zuid, mit dem Monteverdi Choir und dem English Consort. Er ist für sein Interesse an zeitgenössischer Musik bekannt und sang den Wowa in Schnittkes *Leben mit einem Idioten* sowohl an der English National Opera als auch der Scottish Opera. Zudem trat er in der Rolle des Dieners in der Uraufführung von John Bullers *The Bacchae* auf.



Peter Hoare Bardolfo

Peter Hoare was born in Bradford. His operatic roles include Jaquino (*Fidelio*), Tito (*La clemenza di Tito*), Narraboth (*Salome*), Simpleton (*Boris Godunov*), Tikhon (*Katya Kabanova*), Arbace (*Idomeneo*), Goro (*Madama Butterfly*), Tchekalinsky (*Pique Dame*) for Welsh National Opera; Pang (*Turandot*), The Schoolmaster (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) for Scottish Opera; Bardolfo (*Falstaff*), Valzacchi (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Pang (*Turandot*), Spoletta (*Tosca*) for the Royal Opera; Mr Upfold (*Albert Herring*) and Arbace (*Idomeneo*). He has sung at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Berlin Philharmonie, Opéra de Lausanne and Welsh National Opera. His recordings include Master of Ceremonies (Gloriana) for Decca and Leonard Meryll (The Yeomen of the Guard) for Telarc.

Peter Hoare est né à Bradford (Angleterre). Il a incarné notamment Jaquino (*Fidelio*), Tito (*La Clémence de Titus*), Narraboth (*Salomé*), Simpleton (*Boris Godounov*), Tikhon (*Kat'a Kabanová*), Arbace (*Idomeneo*), Goro (*Madame Butterfly*) et Tchekalinsky (*La Dame de pique*) à l'Opéra national du Pays de Galles ; Pang (*Turandot*) et le Maître d'école (*La Petite Renarde rusée*) au Scottish Opera ; Bardolfo (*Falstaff*), Valzacchi (*Le Chevalier à la rose*), Pang (*Turandot*) et Spoletta (*Tosca*) à Covent Garden ; Mr Upfold (*Albert Herring*) et Arbace (*Idomeneo*). Il a également été l'invité du Festival de Glyndebourne, de la Philharmonie de Berlin et de l'Opéra de Lausanne. Parmi ses enregistrements, citons le Maître de cérémonie (Gloriana de Britten) pour Decca et Leonard Meryll (The Yeomen of the Guard de Gilbert et Sullivan) pour Telarc.

Peter Hoare wurde in Bradford (Großbritannien) geboren. Zu seinen Opernrollen gehören Jaquino (*Fidelio*), Tito (*La clemenza di Tito*), Narraboth (*Salome*), der Schwachsinnige (*Boris Godunow*), Tichon (*Katja Kabanová*), Arbace (*Idomeneo*), Goro (*Madam Butterfly*), Czekalinsky (*Pique-Dame*) für die Welsh National Opera; Pang (*Turandot*), der Schulmeister (*Das schlaue Fuchslein*) für die Scottish Opera; Bardolph (*Falstaff*), Valzacchi (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Pang (*Turandot*), Spoletta (*Tosca*) für das Royal Opera House (Covent Garden); Mr. Upfold (Albert Herring) und Arbace (*Idomeneo*). Er sang in der Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Philharmonie Berlin, Opéra de Lausanne und Welsh National Opera. Zu seinen Aufnahmen zählen der Zeremonienmeister (Gloriana) für Decca und Leonard Meryll (The Yeomen of the Guard) für Telarc.



Darren Jeffery Pistola

Darren Jeffery was born in Fordham and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. He received a Peter Moores Foundation Scholarship and won the prestigious Curtis Gold Medal. He was a Vilar Young Artist with the Royal Opera Covent Garden where his roles include Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), Bonzo (*Madama Butterfly*), Monterone (*Rigoletto*), Baron (*La Traviata*). Other significant roles include Donner (*Das Rheingold*) for English National Opera. He has also sung with the Bach Choir and Savoy Opera.

Originaire de Fordham, Darren Jeffery a étudié au Royal Northern College of Music de Manchester. Bénéficiaire d'une bourse de la Fondation Peter Moores, il a également remporté la prestigieuse Médaille d'or Curtis. Il a été nommé Vilar Young Artist de l'Opéra royal de Covent Garden, chantant des rôles comme Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), le Bonze (*Madame Butterfly*), Monterone (*Rigoletto*), le Baron (*La Traviata*). Parmi ses rôles marquants, signalons encore Donner (*L'Or du Rhin*) à l'English National Opera. Il a chanté en outre avec le Bach Choir et le Savoy Opera.

Darren Jeffery wurde in Fordham (Großbritannien) geboren und studierte am Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. Er war Stipendiat der Peter Moores Foundation und Gewinner einer hoch angesehenen Curtis-Goldmedaille. Er erhielt die Auszeichnung, als Vilar Young Artist am Förderprogramm für junger Sänger des Royal Opera House (Covent Garden) teilzunehmen, wo Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), Onkel Bonze (*Madam Butterfly*), Graf von Monterone (*Rigoletto*) und Baron Douphal (*La Traviata*) zu seinen Rollen zählten. Eine weitere wichtige Rolle war die des Donners (*Das Rheingold*) für die English National Opera. Darren Jeffery trat auch mit dem Bach Choir und in der Savoy Opera.



Ana Ibarra Alice Ford

Ana Ibarra was born in Valencia, Spain and started her vocal studies at the Conservatory Joaquín Rodrigo under the direction of Ana Luisa Chova. She has attended courses with Renata Scotto, Elena Obratzova, Félix Lavilla and Miguel Zanetti, and completed her operatic repertory in Munich and Vienna with D. Aronson, Herbert Tachezi, Wolfram Rieger and Donald Sulzen. She has given recitals at the Madrid National Auditorium, Palau de la Música of Barcelona, Palau de la Música of Valencia, the National Radio Auditorium of Bucharest and Karajan-Zentrum of Vienna. In opera she has sung Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Antonia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*), Alice (*Falstaff*), Berta (*Babel 46*), the Countess (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Euridice (*Orfeo and Euridice*) and she has recorded a CD with poems by Tomas Garces and music of Montsalvatge and Toldrà.

Née à Valence, en Espagne, Ana Ibarra a commencé ses études de chant au Conservatoire Joaquín Rodrigo, auprès d'Ana Luisa Chova. Elle a pris des cours avec Renata Scotto, Elena Obratzova, Félix Lavilla et Miguel Zanetti, et a élargi son répertoire lyrique à Munich et à Vienne avec D. Aronson, Herbert Tachezi, Wolfram Rieger et Donald Sulzen. Elle a donné des récitals à l'Auditorium national de Madrid, au Palau de la Música de Barcelone, au Palau de la Música de Valence, à l'Auditorium national de Bucarest et au Karajan-Zentrum de Vienne. A la scène, elle a incarné Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Antonia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Dido (*Dido and Enée*), Alice (*Falstaff*), Berta (*Babel 46*), la Comtesse (*Les Noces de Figaro*), Euridice (*Orfeo ed Euridice*). Elle a enregistré un CD de poèmes de Tomas Garces avec de la musique de Montsalvatge et de Toldrà.

Ana Ibarra wurde in Valencia (Spanien) geboren und begann ihr Gesangsstudium am Konservatorium Joaquín Rodrigo unter der Anleitung von Ana Luisa Chova. Sie besuchte Kurse von Renata Scotto, Elena Obratzowa, Félix Lavilla und Miguel Zanetti. Ihr Opernrepertoire vervollständigte sie in München und Wien bei D. Aronson, Herbert Tachezi, Wolfram Rieger und Donald Sulzen. Ana Ibarra gab Solokonzerte im Auditorio Nacional Madrid, Palau de la Música Barcelona, Palau de la Música Valencia, im Sendesaal des rumänischen Rundfunks in Bukarest und im Karajan Centrum in Wien. Zu ihren Opernrollen gehören die Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Antonia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*), Alice (*Falstaff*), Berta (*Montsalvatges Babel 46*), die Gräfin (*Le nozze di Figaro*) und Eurydike (*Orphée et Eurydice*). Aufgenommen hat sie eine CD mit Gedichten von Tomas Garces und Musik von Montsalvatge und Toldrà.



Maria José Moreno Nannetta

Maria José Mareno was born in Granada, Spain and won the Francisco Viñas competition in 1997. She has sung in the major Spanish theatres, with conductors such as Maag, Rudel, Lopez-Cóbo, Zedda, Bruggen and Bonynghe. Other roles include Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Elvira (*I Puritani*), Amina (*Sonnambula*), Lucia (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), the Queen of the Night (*The Magic Flute*), Marie (*La Fille du régiment*), Rosina (*The Barber of Seville*), Olympia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Fiorilla (*Il Turco in Italia*), the Countess de Folleville (*Viaggio a Reims*), Musetta (*La bohème*), Adina (*Elisir d'amore*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*), Ännchen (*Freischütz*), Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Morgana (*Alcina*), Drusilla (*Incoronazione di Poppea*), Oscar (*Ballo in maschera*), and Sophie (*Werther*). She made her debut at the Vienna Staatsoper in 2001 and in November 2002 at Teatro alla Scala.

Maria José Mareno est née à Grenade, en Espagne, et a remporté le Concours Francisco Viñas en 1997. Elle a chanté sur les plus grandes scènes espagnoles, avec des chefs comme Maag, Rudel, Lopez-Cóbo, Zedda, Bruggen et Bonynghe. Parmi les rôles qu'elle a interprétés, citons Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Elvira (*I Puritani*), Amina (*Sonnambula*), Lucia (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), la Reine de la Nuit (*La Flûte enchantée*), Marie (*La Fille du régiment*), Rosina (*Le Barbier de Séville*), Olympia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Fiorilla (*Le Turc en Italie*), la Comtesse de Folleville (*Le Voyage à Reims*), Musetta (*La Bohème*), Adina (*L'Elixir d'amour*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*), Ännchen (*Le Freischütz*), Susanna (*Les Noces de Figaro*), Morgana (*Alcina*), Drusilla (*Le Couronnement de Poppée*), Oscar (*Un bal masqué*) et Sophie (*Werther*). Elle a fait ses débuts à la Staatsoper de Vienne en 2001 et à la Scala de Milan en novembre 2002.

Maria José Mareno wurde in Granada (Spanien) geboren und gewann 1997 den Francisco-Viñas-Wettbewerb. Sie sang auf den großen spanischen Bühnen unter Dirigenten wie Maag, Rudel, Lopez-Cóbo, Zedda, Bruggen und Bonynghe. Zu ihren Rollen gehören die Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Elvira (*I Puritani*), Amina (*La Sonnambula*), Lucia (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), die Königin der Nacht (*Die Zauberflöte*), Marie (*La Fille du régiment*), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Seviglia*), Olympia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Fiorilla (*Il Turco in Italia*), die Contessa di Folleville (*Viaggio à Reims*), Musette (*La Bohème*), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), Nannetta (*Falstaff*), Ännchen (*Der Freischütz*), Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Morgana (*Alcina*), Drusilla (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Oscar (*Un ballo in maschera*) und Sophie (*Werther*). Sie trat 2001 erstmals an der Wiener Staatsoper auf und im November 2002 erstmals am Teatro alla Scala.



Jane Henschel Mrs Quickly

Jane Henschel has appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic, LSO, Concertgebouw, Boston Symphony, BBC Symphony and Philadelphia orchestras with conductors including Sir Colin Davis, Chailly, Ozawa, Conlon, Maazel, Sir Simon Rattle, Janowski and Sir Andrew Davis. She has sung on numerous recordings for Decca, Philips and EMI. She has sung at Glyndebourne, Saito Kinen and Salzburg festivals, Los Angeles Opera, Paris Opera, San Francisco Opera, Royal Opera Covent Garden, Teatro alla Scala. Her signature role has become Amme (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), which she has sung throughout Europe and in the US. She will sing Erda in the new Ring Cycle for the Royal Opera and Auntie (*Peter Grimes*) in Salzburg with Sir Simon Rattle.

Jane Henschel s'est produite avec l'Orchestre philharmonique de Berlin, le LSO, le Concertgebouw d'Amsterdam, l'Orchestre symphonique de Boston, l'Orchestre symphonique de la BBC et l'Orchestre de Philadelphie avec des chefs comme Sir Colin Davis, Chailly, Ozawa, Conlon, Maazel, Sir Simon Rattle, Janowski et Sir Andrew Davis. Elle apparaît sur de nombreux enregistrements réalisés chez Decca, Philips et EMI. Elle a été invitée par les festivals de Glyndebourne, Saito Kinen et Salzbourg, les opéras de Los Angeles, Paris et San Francisco, à Covent Garden et à la Scala. Son rôle fétiche est aujourd'hui Amme (*La Femme sans ombre*), qu'elle a chanté dans toute l'Europe et aux Etats-Unis. Elle incarnera Erda dans la prochaine production du Ring à Covent Garden et Auntie (*Peter Grimes*) à Salzbourg sous la direction de Sir Simon Rattle.

Jane Henschel trat mit den Berliner Philharmonikern, dem London Symphony Orchestra, Concertgebouw Orkest, Boston Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra und dem Philadelphia Orchestra auf unter der Leitung von Dirigenten wie Sir Colin Davis, Chailly, Ozawa, Conlon, Maazel, Sir Simon Rattle, Janowski und Sir Andrew Davis. Sie sang in zahlreichen Aufnahmen für Decca, Philips und EMI. Sie war in Glyndebourne, beim Saito-Kinen-Festival und den Salzburger Festspielen sowie in der Los Angeles Opera, Opéra National de Paris, San Francisco Opera, im Royal Opera House (Covent Garden) und Teatro alla Scala zu hören. Ihre Leib- und Magenrolle wurde die Amme (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), die sie in ganz Europa und den USA interpretierte. Sie wird die Erda in der neuen Inszenierung des Rings am Royal Opera House (Covent Garden) und Tantjen (*Peter Grimes*) in Salzburg unter Sir Simon Rattle singen.



Marina Domashenko Meg Page

Marina Domashenko was born in Kemerovo in Russia and graduated with honors as a pianist and conductor from the Kemerovo Arts Institute and from the Ekaterinburg Conservatoire where she also studied opera singing under Svetlana Zaliznyak. She won first prizes in the International Antonín Dvořák Singing Competition in 1997 and the Concorso Internazionale per Giovani Cantanti D'Opera 'Gianfranco Masini' in 1999. She made her European debut in 1998 in Prague where she performed Olga in *Eugene Onegin*. Her American debut was in 2000 with the San Francisco Opera as Dalila in a gala concert of *Samson et Dalila* opposite Plácido Domingo. She has also sung at Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Paris Opera, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Vienna Staatsoper, Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Metropolitan Opera and with the LSO. Future engagements include *Carmen* at the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin; San Diego Opera and Vienna State Opera.

Marina Domashenko est née à Kemerovo (Russie) et a reçu un diplôme avec félicitations du jury en piano et direction d'orchestre à l'Institut des arts de Kemerovo et au Conservatoire d'Ekaterinbourg, où elle a également étudié le chant avec Svetlana Zaliznyak. Elle a remporté le premier prix au Concours international de chant Antonín Dvořák en 1997 et au Concorso Internazionale per Giovani Cantanti d'Opera Gianfranco Masini en 1999. Elle a fait ses débuts européens en 1998 à Prague, incarnant Olga dans *Eugène Onéguine*. Sa première apparition aux Etats-Unis a été, en 2000, un concert de gala à l'Opéra de San Francisco, où elle incarnait Dalila dans *Samson et Dalila* auprès de Plácido Domingo. Elle a également chanté à la Fenice de Venise, à l'Opéra de Paris, au Teatro Comunale de Bologne, à la Staatsoper de Vienne, à la Deutsche Oper de Berlin, au Metropolitan Opera et avec le LSO. Parmi ses engagements à venir, citons *Carmen* au Metropolitan Opera, à Covent Garden, à la Deutsche Staatsoper de Berlin, à l'Opéra de San Diego et à la Staatsoper de Vienne.

Marina Domaschenko wurde in Kemerowo (Russland) geboren und schloss ihre Studien im Fach Klavier und Dirigieren am Kunstinstitut von Kemerowo und am Konservatorium in Ekaterinburg mit Auszeichnung ab. In Ekaterinburg studierte sie auch Operngesang bei Svetlana Zaliznyak. 1997 gewann Marina Domaschenko den ersten Preis beim Internationalen Antonin-Dvorak-Wettbewerb und 1999 den Concorso Internazionale per Giovani Cantanti d'Opera "Gianfranco Masini". Ihr erster europäischer Auftritt erfolgte 1998 in Prag, wo sie die Olga in *Evgenij Onegin* sang. In Amerika trat sie zum ersten Mal 2000 als Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* in einem Galakonzert neben Plácido Domingo an der San Francisco Opera auf. Sie sang auch im Teatro La Fenice in Venedig, in der Opéra National de Paris, im Teatro Comunale di Bologna, in der Wiener Staatsoper, der Deutschen Oper Berlin, der Metropolitan Opera und mit dem London Symphony Orchestra. Zu den zukünftigen Engagements gehören Auftritte am Royal Opera House (Covent Garden), der Deutschen Staatsoper Berlin, der San Diego Opera, der Wiener Staatsoper und die *Carmen* an der Metropolitan Opera.

Sir Colin Davis, CH conductor



Keith Saunders

Sir Colin Davis has been Principal Conductor of the LSO since 1995 and is also Honorary Conductor of the Dresden Staatskapelle. He has recorded widely with Philips, BMG and Erato as well as LSO Live. His releases on LSO Live have won numerous prestigious awards and include music by Berlioz, Bruckner, Dvořák and Holst. Sir Colin has been awarded international honours by Italy, France, Germany and Finland and, in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2002, he was named a Member of the Order of the Companions of Honour. In 2002 Sir Colin received the Classical BRIT award for Best Male Artist and, in 2003 was given the Yehudi Menuhin Prize by the Queen of Spain for his work with young people. Sir Colin began his career at the BBC Scottish Orchestra, moving to Sadler's Wells in 1959. Following four years as Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, he became Music Director of the Royal Opera House in 1971 and Principal Guest Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1972. Between 1983 and 1992 he worked with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and was Principal Guest Conductor at the New York Philharmonic from 1998 through to the 2002/2003 season, and has been Honorary Conductor of the

Dresden Staatskapelle since 1990.

Premier Chef du LSO depuis 1995, Sir Colin Davis est également Chef honoraire de la Staatskapelle de Dresde depuis 1990. Il a enregistré abondamment chez Philips, BMG et Erato ainsi que LSO Live. En 2003, LSO Live a publié ses enregistrements de la Symphonie n°3 d'Elgar, de la Symphonie n°7 de Dvořák, The Planets de Holst et de Harold en Italie de Berlioz avec Tebba Zimmermann. Enregistrement du mois du magazine Gramophone. Sir Colin a reçu des distinctions internationales en Italie, en France, en Allemagne et en Finlande et, à l'occasion des Queen's Birthday Honours 2002, il a été nommé membre de l'ordre des Companions of Honour. Sir Colin a été récompensé par les BRIT awards et, en 2003 la reine d'Espagne lui a remis le Prix Yehudi Menuhin pour son travail avec les enfants. Sir Colin a débuté au BBC Scottish Orchestra, passant en 1959 au Théâtre de Sadler's Wells, à Londres. Après avoir été pendant quatre ans le Premier Chef du BBC Symphony Orchestra, il est devenu Directeur musical du Royal Opera House de Londres en 1971 et Premier Chef invité du Boston Symphony Orchestra l'année suivante. De 1983 à 1992, il a travaillé avec l'Orchestre symphonique de la Radio Bavaroise et il a été Premier Chef invité du New York Philharmonic de 1998 à la saison 2002/2003.

Sir Colin Davis ist seit 1995 Chefdirigent des LSO und auch Ehrenmitglied der Dresdner Staatskapelle. Er dirigierte zahlreiche Aufnahmen für Philips, BMG und Erato. Im Jahre 2003 veröffentlichte das LSO Live-Label seine Interpretationen von Elgars Sinfonie Nr. 3, Dvořák Sinfonie Nr. 7, Holsts The Planets und Berlioz' Harold in Italien mit Tebba Zimmermann. Letztgenannte Aufnahme wurde vom britischen Magazin Gramophone zur CD des Monats erklärt. Sir Colin erhielt internationale Auszeichnungen in Italien, Frankreich, Deutschland und Finnland, und während der Titelverleihung zum Geburtstag der britischen Königin Elizabeth II. 2002 wurde er zum Mitglied des Ordens der Companions of Honour ernannt. Sir Colin sicherte sich diverse BRIT-Awards, und im Jahre 2003 erhielt er den Yehudi-Menuhin-Preis von der spanischen Königin für seine Arbeit mit jungen Menschen. Sir Colin begann seine Laufbahn beim BBC Scottish Orchestra. 1959 wechselte er zur Sadler's Wells Opera Company nach London. Nach vier Jahren als Chefdirigent des BBC Symphony Orchestra wurde er 1971 zum Musikdirektor des Royal Opera Houses Covent Garden ernannt und 1972 zum ersten Gastdirigenten des Boston Symphony Orchestra. Zwischen 1983–1992 arbeitete Sir Colin mit dem Sinfonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, und von 1998 bis zur Spielzeit 2002/2003 war er erster Gastdirigent des New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Ehrenmitglied der Dresdner Staatskapelle ist er seit 1990.

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Carmine Lauri
Lennox Mackenzie
Michael Humphrey
Nigel Broadbent
Ginette Decuyper
Jörg Hammann
Maxine Kwok
Claire Parfitt
Elizabeth Pigram
Harriet Rayfield
Colin Renwick
Ian Rhodes
Sylvain Vasseur
Nicole Wilson
Nicholas Wright

Second Violins

David Alberman *
Sarah Quinn
David Ballesteros
Richard Blayden
Norman Clarke
Matthew Gardner
Ian McDonough
Belinda McFarlane
Andrew Pollock
Paul Robson
Stephen Rowlinson
Louise Shackelton
Tammy Se
Iwona Muszynska

Violas

Paul Silverthorne *
Malcolm Johnston
Maxine Moore
Regina Beukes
Duff Burns
Peter Norriss
Robert Turner
Jonathan Welch
Gina Zagni
Brian Clarke
Carol Ella

Cellos

Tim Hugh *
Rebecca Gilliver
Alastair Blayden
Jennifer Brown
Raymond Adams
Noel Bradshaw
Nicholas Gethin
Hilary Jones
Francis Saunders

Double Basses

Rinat Ibragimov *
Colin Paris
Nicholas Worters
Patrick Laurence
Gerald Newson
Matthew Gibson
Thomas Goodman
Michael Francis

Flutes

Paul Edmund-Davies *
Martin Parry

Piccolo

Sharon Williams *

Oboes

Roy Carter *
John Lawley

Cor anglais

Christine Pendrill *

Clarinets

Andrew Marriner *
Chi-Yu Mo

Bass Clarinet

John Stenhouse *

Bassoons

Rachel Gough *
Nicholas Hunka

Horns

Timothy Jones *
David Pyatt *
Jonathan Durrant
John Ryan
Jonathan Lipton

Trumpets

Maurice Murphy *
Gerald Ruddock
Nigel Gomm

Trombones

Dudley Bright *
James Maynard

Bass Trombone

Andrew Waddicor **

Tuba

Patrick Harrild *

Timpani

Nigel Thomas *

Percussion

Neil Percy *
David Jackson

Harp

Karen Vaughan *

Guitar

Forbes Henderson **

* Principal

** Guest Principal

LONDON SYMPHONY CHORUS



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Helen Lawford

The London Symphony Chorus was formed in 1966 as a choral partner for the London Symphony Orchestra. At the heart of the Chorus's repertoire lie the great 19th and 20th century choral classics, but the Chorus has also shown great aptitude for contemporary music over the years and has commissioned a number of new works: Sir John Tavener's *The Myrrh Bearer*, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Three Kings* and Jonathan Dove's *The Passing of the Year*. The Chorus has an extensive discography. Its partnership with Richard Hickox has produced many recordings, including Britten's *Peter Grimes*, which received a Grammy Award, and *Billy Budd*. The Chorus received two further Grammy Awards for its participation in Berlioz's *Les Troyens* with Sir Colin Davis and the LSO.

JOSEPH CULLEN, Chorus Director of the London Symphony Chorus, was born in Glasgow. His innovative approach to choral training has established him as one of the foremost choral conductors in the UK. He has been Chorus Master of the Huddersfield Choral Society since August 1999, and has also held the positions of Chorus Director of the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. He has appeared as a conductor and guest chorus master with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Symphony Chorus, Philharmonia Chorus and BBC Singers.

MEMBERS OF THE LONDON SYMPHONY CHORUS

SOPRANOS

Aileen Biagi, Pam Buckley, Debra Colvin, Gabriella Galgani, Jane Goddard, Carolin Harvey, Gladys Hosken, Debbie Jones, Katherine Kilburn, Nancy King, Helen Lawford, Clare Lorimer, Alison Marshall, Dorothy Nesbit, Clare Noakes, Sue Pollard, Mikiko Ridd, Jennifer Silvers-Suh, Amanda Thomas, Rachel Tubby, Julia Warner

ALTOS

Mary Baker, Margaret Baxter, Monica Channell, Rosie Chute, Liz Cole, Sarah Castleton, Janette Daines, Diane Dwyer, Linda Evans, Lydia Frankenburg, Amanda Freshwater, Christina Gibbs, Belinda Liao, Etsuko Makita, Barbara Marchbank, Rita Marson, Jane Steele, Claire Trocme, Curzon Tussaud, Judith Youdell, Mimi Zadeh

TENORS

David Aldred, Paul Allatt, Lorne Cuithbert, John Farrington, John Harding, Brian Hazell, Warwick Hood, Gareth Humphreys, Tony Instrall, Michael Jones, John Marks, Malcolm Nightingale, Stuart Packford, Ric Philips, Anthony Stutchbury, Owen Toller, James Warbis, Robert Ward.

BASSES

Alastair Forbes, Robert Garbolinski, Trevor Glover, Owen Hanmer, Anthony Howick, Alex Kidney, Gregor Kowalski, Geoff Newman, Peter Niven, Alan Rochford, Malcolm Rowat, Edwin Smith, Paul Warburton

The London Symphony Chorus gratefully acknowledges the sponsorship of Harrods Bank Limited

London Symphony Orchestra

The LSO was formed in 1904 as London's first self-governing orchestra and has been resident orchestra at the Barbican since 1982. Sir Colin Davis became Principal Conductor in 1995 following in the footsteps of Hans Richter, Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Thomas Beecham, André Previn, Claudio Abbado and Michael Tilson Thomas among others. The Orchestra gives numerous concerts around the world each year, plus more performances in London than any other orchestra. It is the world's most recorded symphony orchestra and has appeared on some of the greatest classical recordings and film soundtracks. The LSO also runs LSO Discovery, its ground-breaking education programme that is dedicated to introducing the finest music to young and old alike and lets everyone learn more from the Orchestra's players. For more information visit www.lso.co.uk

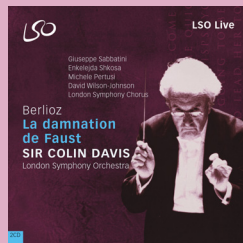
Premier orchestre autogéré de Londres, le LSO fut fondé en 1904. Il est en résidence au Barbican depuis 1982. En 1995, Sir Colin Davis en est devenu le Chef principal, inscrivant son nom à la suite de ceux de Hans Richter, Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Thomas Beecham, André Previn, Claudio Abbado et Michael Tilson Thomas, entre autres. Chaque année, l'Orchestre donne de nombreux concerts à travers le monde, tout en se produisant plus souvent à Londres que n'importe quel autre orchestre. C'est l'orchestre au monde qui a le plus enregistré, et on le retrouve sur des enregistrements devenus de grands classiques, ainsi que sur les bandes son des films les plus célèbres. Grâce à LSO Discovery, l'Orchestre est également un pionnier en matière de pédagogie; ce programme s'attache à faire découvrir les plus belles pages du répertoire aux enfants comme aux adultes, et à permettre à chacun de s'enrichir au contact des musiciens de l'Orchestre. Pour plus d'informations, rendez vous sur le site www.lso.co.uk

Das LSO wurde 1904 als erstes selbstverwaltetes Orchester in London gegründet und ist seit 1982 im dortigen Barbican beheimatet. Sir Colin Davis wurde 1995 in der Nachfolge von Hans Richter, Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Thomas Beecham, André Previn, Claudio Abbado, Michael Tilson Thomas und anderen zum Chefdirigenten ernannt. Das Orchester gibt jedes Jahr zahlreiche Konzerte in aller Welt und tritt darüber hinaus häufiger in London auf als jedes andere Orchester. Es ist das meistaufgenommene Orchester der Welt und hat einige der bedeutendsten klassischen Schallplattenaufnahmen und Filmmusiken eingespielt. Daneben zeichnet das LSO verantwortlich für LSO Discovery, ein bahnbrechendes pädagogisches Programm mit dem Ziel, Jung und Alt die schönste Musik nahe zu bringen, damit jedem die Möglichkeit gegeben wird, mehr von den Musikern des Orchesters zu lernen. Wenn Sie mehr erfahren möchten, schauen Sie bei uns herein: www.lso.co.uk

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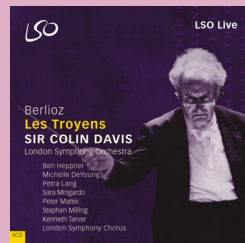
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BERLIOZ La damnation de Faust
Sir Colin Davis conductor



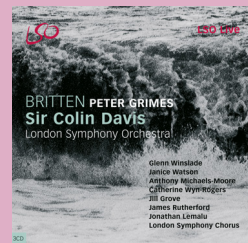
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Sir Colin Davis conductor



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