

## OSSIAN

Music by Jean-François Le Sueur

Libretto by Palat Dercy [& J.-M. Deschamps]

First Performance: Opéra, Paris, July 10, 1804

**Act I.** With Ossian in another part of the country, his tribe of Caledonians has been subjugated by the Scandinavians, led by their prince, the savage Duntalmo. The chief bard, Hydala, explains to the Caledonians that their respected elder bard, Rozmor, has gone into exile because the Scandinavians plan to force the worship of Odin upon them. Hydala also tells them that Rozmor's daughter, Rozmala, is being held prisoner by Duntalmo. Duntalmo arrives proclaiming that Rozmala is to be married to his son, Mornal. Hydala protests that Rozmala is Ossian's beloved. At the moment Salgar, a Scandinavian warrior, breaks in announcing that Ossian and his men are on their way home. In a war chant before the statue of Odin, the Scandinavians vow they will emerge victorious.

**Act II.** Rozmala hopes that Ossian will rescue her from marriage to Mornal. Ossian and his men arrive, and he and Rozmala rejoice in being reunited. After Duntalmo and his men enter, it is decided that the victor of a single combat will claim Rozmala's hand. The impending combat is celebrated with an air de danse and extended choruses.

**Act III.** Exiled in the forest, Rozmor fears his daughter will be forced to adopt Odin's religion and marry Mornal; he prays that the Caledonians will ultimately succeed in overthrowing their Scandinavian war lords. Rozmala now appears, escorted through the forest by one of Duntalmo's guards. Father and daughter express their joy in being restored to each other. Hearing men approach, they hide; it is Hydala and his bards searching for Rozmala. Hydala knows that Duntalmo has Rozmala brought to her father only to make it appear that the Caledonians are responsible for Rozmala's disappearance and thereby to discredit Ossian's pledge. In another part of the forest, pagentry accompanies preparations for the contest by combat. Ossian enters prepared to fight for Rozmala's hand and is led by the Scandinavians to a mountain bridge. As he is about to reach the other side, Duntalmo orders the bridge cut down. It collapses, but Ossian is saved by his men, who break his fall. The Caledonians are outraged by Duntalmo's treachery and prophesy that the Scandinavians will not be given the afterlife awarded to heroes. Ossian is taken prisoner along with Rozmor and Rozmala.

**Act IV.** Ossian has been imprisoned in a vast cavern. He is distraught, knowing that the Scandinavians will have him burned as a sacrifice to Odin. Hydala, who has gained the respect (and fear) of the Scandinavians, enters the cave. He offers to die in Ossian's place. Though deeply moved, Ossian refuses, and the two men pledge eternal friendship. When Hydala departs, Ossian falls asleep. In a long and elaborate dream the hero envisions the spiritual world, which is portrayed in a series of tableaux. When Ossian awakens, he, Rozmala, and Rozmor resign themselves to die nobly. Duntalmo orders that preparations be made to sacrifice three Caledonians to Odin.

**Act V.** Some Caledonians have gathered to lament the impending death of Ossian, Rozmala, and Rozmor. The three captives are brought in, and Duntalmo signals the sacrifice to begin. Salgar enters suddenly with the news that a troop of Ossian's men, under unknown leadership, is advancing and has already killed Mornal. The sounds of battle are heard, and Ossian is surreptitiously armed. Hydala has rallied the Caledonians and, with Ossian, quickly manages to rout the Scandinavians. Duntalmo is killed, and all celebrate the joyous outcome.