

## Franz Schubert - Fierrabras (1990)

Written by bluesever

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Act I 01 Ouverture / Orchester [play](#) 02 Der runde Silberfaden / Jungfrauen, Emma 03 O moeg' auf froher Hoffnung Schwingen / Eginhard, Emma 04 Zu hohen Ruhmespforten / Orchester, Chor 05 Die Beute lass, o Herr, die Krieger teilen / Ogier, Roland, Karl, Chor 06 Des Krieges Los hat euch mir uebergeben / Karl, Chor 07 Wer bist du, dessen tiefgesenkter Blick / Karl, Roland, Fierrabras 08 Der Landestochter fromme Pflichten / Emma, Jungfrauen; Karl, Fierrabras, Roland, Chor 09 Dem Erfolg vertrauen / Ritter, Ogier, Karl; Emma, Eginhard, Fierrabras, Roland 10 Zu hohen Ruhmespforten / Orchester, Chor 11 Lass uns mutvoll hoffen / Fierrabras, Roland 12 Der Abend sinkt auf stiller Flur / Eginhard, Emma 13 Was quaelst du mich, o Missgeschick!... / Fierrabras 14 Doch horch! Was regt sich noch in stiller Nacht? / Fierrabras, Maennerchor, Emma, Eginhard 15 Ha, hier waltet ein Verrat! / Fierrabras, Eginhard, Emma 16 Nun fasset Mut! / Fierrabras, Emma 17 Ha! - Wie, Emma hier? / Emma, Fierrabras, Karl 18 Dich rief ich, Eginhard / Karl, Eginhard, Emma, Fierrabras 19 Fort zum Siegesreigen / Ritter; Emma, Eginhard, Fierrabras, Karl Act II 20 Im jungen Morgenstrahle / Eginhard, Roland; Ritter 21 Beschossen ist's, ich loese seine Ketten! / Eginhard, Brutamonte, Mauren

[play](#)

22 Was ist ihm geschehn? / Roland, Ogier; Ritter 23 Weit ueber Glanz und Erdenchimmer / Florinda, Maragond 24 Verderben denn und Fluch / Boland, Florinda, Maragond, Eginhard, Brutamonte 25 Lass Friede in die Hallen / Chor 26 Im Tode sollt ihr buessen / Boland, Roland, Florinda; Ritter, Mauren 27 Sie sollen erblassen in heimlicher Not / Boland, Mauren, Florinda, Roland, Ritter 28 Die Brust, gebeugt von Sorgen / Florinda 29 O teures Vaterland! / Eginhard, Ogier, Roland; Ritter 30 Ha! Was ist das? / Ritter, Olivier, Ogier, Roland, Florinda 31 Selbst an des Grabes Rande / Roland, Florinda; Ritter 32 Der Hoffnung Strahl, den du gegeben / Ritter, Ogier, Roland, Florinda, Eginhard 33 Uns fuehrt der Vorsicht weise Hand / Eginhard, Roland, Florinda; Ritter 34 Schuetzt ihn, ihr ew'gen Maechte! / Florinda, Ritter

Act III

35 Bald toenet der Reigen / Jungfrauen, Emma 36 Bald wird es klar / Karl, Emma, Fierrabras 37 Wo ist mein koeniglicher Herr? / Eginhard, Emma, Fierrabras, Karl 38 Wenn hoch im Wolkenitze / Fierrabras, Eginhard, Emma 39 Des Jammers herbe Qualen / Florinda, Ritter 40 Welch neuer Schreck! / Florinda, Olivier, Ritter

[play](#)

41 Der Rache Opfer fallen / Mauren 42 Erbarmen fleht zu deinen Fuessen / Florinda, Boland; Ritter, Mauren, Roland 43 Er ist mein Vater, halte ein! / Fierrabras, Florinda; Ritter 44 Der Sieg begleitet meine tapfern Heere / Karl, Boland; Eginhard, Emma, Fierrabras, Florinda, Roland;

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*Chor 45 Vereint durch Bruderbande / Karl; Tutti*

Koenig Karl - Robert Holl Emma - Karita Mattila Roland - Thomas Hampson Eginhard - Robert Gambill Boland - Laszlo Polgar Fierrabras - Josef Protschka Florinda - Cheryl Studer Maragond - Brigitte Baileys Brutamonte - Hartmut Welker Arnold Schoenberg Chor, chorus master Erwin Ortner The Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Claudio Abbado - conductor Recorded in 1988

Fierrabras is a three-act opera written by the composer Franz Schubert in 1823, to a libretto by Josef Kupelwieser, the general manager of the Theater am Kärntnertor (Vienna's Court Opera Theatre). Along with the earlier *Alfonso und Estrella*, composed in 1822, it marks Schubert's attempt to compose grand Romantic opera in German, departing from the Singspiel tradition.

The Kärntnertor Theater in 1822 commissioned operas from Schubert and Carl Maria von Weber in a drive to increase the number of German operas in repertoire. Schubert fulfilled his commission with *Fierrabras*, von Weber his with *Euryanthe*. The Italian theatre director Domenico Barbaja, who had taken over the theatre in 1821, at the same time brought Rossini to Vienna to oversee production of several of his operas at the Kärntnertor Theater. Rossini's operas were so popular that *Euryanthe* unsuccessfully premiered in October 1823, resulting in the shelving of plans to stage *Fierrabras*, and the resignation of Josef Kupelwieser as director of the theater, complaining of "arrogance" on the part of Barbaja. As a result, Schubert never saw the opera staged, or even received payment for his work.

On May 7, 1835 (seven years after Schubert's death), at the Theater in der Josefstadt, Vienna, a concert-version of several numbers was staged. The work is generally considered to suffer from an extremely weak libretto. Its first full performance was not until 1897, despite "much magnificent music in Schubert's score", when it was given at the Hoftheater Karlsruhe under the direction of Felix Mottl. The 1897 performance was edited by Mottl for the tastes of the day, resulting in scenes being cut, and ballet interludes injected into the performance.

In the 20th century, the opera received a radio broadcast from Brussels on January 14, 1926. A London concert of November 6, 1938 featured excerpts from the work. An abridged version of the opera was given in a 1959 radio broadcast from Bern, and later issued on record. The first British performance was a Radio 3 broadcast on April 10, 1971.[6] Concert versions of the opera were presented in 1978 in Perugia, and in 1980 in Aachen, and staged revivals (presumably of the Mottl version) took place in the early 1980s in Philadelphia, Augsburg, and Hermance. In 1988, Claudio Abbado directed performances of a complete staging of the opera

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(likely the first performances that used all of Schubert's music) at the Theater an der Wien, which formed the basis of the first complete recording of the work.

Other than being the only one of the heroes who finishes up without a girl, his is not even one of the most distinctive parts and he gets nothing to sing in Act II. Florinda is a more dramatic role than the rest put together despite not appearing in Act I. The basis of the plot is as follows:- Emma daughter of Charlemagne secretly loves Eginhard who is out of favour with her father who is at war with the Moors. In Charlemagne's victorious retinue is Roland who has captured Fierrabras son of the Moorish Prince Boland. Fierrabras secretly loves Emma since he met her in Italy 4 years previously. Roland secretly loves Florinda sister of Fierrabras after meeting her in Italy at the same time. Fierrabras is gutted to find that Emma loves Eginhard, but tries to protect their secret from Charlemagne who gets the idea that Fierrabras must have seduced Emma. Got all that? Oliver is also in Charlemagne's retinue but has only a minor part compared with Roland who is on no account to be confused with Boland. To my Anglophone ears Boland seems an odd name to come from that part of the world, but he is not alone in that -- the minor Latin epic poet Silius Italicus has a Carthaginian soothsayer called Bogus. Another intriguing touch is that Boland plans to burn his foes at the stake. I thought it was Christians who did that.

In Act II some melodramatic, if not exactly dramatic, action gets going. It seems to have been Liszt who originally said that Schubert could not compose operas. I am not about to contradict the great man, but a more charitable view could see his statement as a bit of a sweeper. The very helpful liner notes say very sensibly that Fierrabras probably makes a good spectacular, and that combined with the music, which after all is not by just anyone, makes it perfectly viable on its own terms. Mozart or Verdi, born dramatists both, would probably have struggled to give individuality to the characters, and Schubert was only feeling his way in opera. I for one would certainly go to see it if I got the chance.

The music is good without being exactly the greatest Schubert. Act I is mainly ensembles and you could well find some new favourite Schubert tunes among them if the score is new to you. Act II, as well as having some real action, starts with the best tune of all oddly prefaced with a single all-together-now chord, much the way Jimmy Shand and his Band used to start everything. The singing strikes me as very good without any of it being exceptional, and the recording ditto. In the last resort this is a major piece of out-of-the-way Schubert. I believe he had the greatest purely musical gift any man ever had, and he would surely have achieved things unthinkable, in this form as in the others, had he lived. The liner gives the first line of each number followed by a summary of the rest rather than the full libretto, which strikes me as

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admirably practical. So 5 stars and no nitpicking. ---David Bryson

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