



## C.M. von WEBER

### Overture to *Oberon*

**Carl Maria Friedrich Ernst von Weber** was born on 18 or 19 November 1786 and was a German composer, conductor, pianist, guitarist and critic. He was born in Eutin, Holstein, the eldest of the three children of Franz Anton von Weber and his second wife, Weber's father gave him a comprehensive education, which was however interrupted by the family's constant moves. In 1796, Weber continued his musical education in Hildburghausen, where he was instructed by the oboist Johann Peter Heuschkel. In 1803, Weber's opera, *Peter Schmoll und seine Nachbarn* (*Peter Schmoll and his Neighbors*) was produced in Augsburg, and gave Weber his first success as a popular composer. Weber sought to reform the Opera by pensioning off older singers, expanding the orchestra, and tackling a more challenging repertoire. Genovefa BrennerWeber's operas *Der Freischütz*, *Euryanthe* and *Oberon* greatly influenced the development of the Romantic opera in Germany. Weber's lifelong interest in the music of non-Western cultures was influenced by Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This interest was first manifested in Weber's incidental music for Schiller's translation of Gozzi's *Turandot*, for which he used a Chinese melody, making him the first Western composer to use an Asian tune that was not of the pseudo-Turkish kind popularized by Mozart and others. Weber composed four sonatas, two concertos and the *Konzertstück* (*Concert Piece*) in *F minor*. Weber compositions for woodwind instruments occupy an important place in the musical repertoire. His compositions for the clarinet, which include two concertos, a concertino, a quintet, a duo concertante, and variations on a theme (posthumously), are regularly performed today. Weber's contribution to vocal and choral music is also significant. His body of Catholic religious music was highly popular in 19th century Germany, and he composed one of the earliest song cycles. Weber was also notable as one of the first conductors to conduct without a piano or violin. Weber's orchestration has also been highly praised and emulated by later generations of composers His operas influenced the work of later opera composers, especially in Germany, such as Marschner, Meyerbeer and Wagner, as well as several nationalist 19th-century composers such as Glinka. In 1810, Weber visited several cities throughout Germany; from 1813 to 1816 he was director of the Opera in Prague. On 4 November 1817, he married Caroline Brandt, a singer who created the title role of *Silvana*. The successful premiere of *Der Freischütz* on 18 June 1821 in Berlin led to performances all over Europe. Weber died at the house of Sir George Smart during the night of 4/5 June 1826

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*Oberon, or the Elf King's Oath* is a "fairy opera" in three acts by the German composer Carl Maria von Weber. The libretto was written by the English playwright James Robinson Planché, based on the poem by Wieland (translated by Sotheby), which itself was based on the medieval French tale *Huon de Bordeaux*. *Oberon* premiered at Covent Garden, London, on April 12, 1826. Weber died in London on June 6, 1826; the stress of finishing the score of *Oberon* and traveling to London to see it premiered was too much for his poor health. Planché's original libretto for *Oberon* contained a large number of speaking parts. As a result, there have been several attempts to revise the opera by replacing the dialogue with recitative and, on occasion, including several numbers from Weber's earlier opera *Euryanthe*. Some of the characters listed are spoken parts in the original opera, but voice parts when the recitative by Franz Wüllner is used. *Oberon* has settings in medieval France, at the legendary Arabian court of Haroun al-Raschid and in the fairy world. *Oberon* refuses to return to Titania until he has proof that at least one pair of lovers can remain faithful. The fairy Puck procures a magic horn, which he gives to one of Charlemagne's knights, Huon, so that Huon can rescue his lady Reiza from the Arabian court and thus become living testimony to faithfulness. The combination of elements alone allowed Weber much opportunity to compose music suggestive of locale and emotion. While the libretto is often regarded as extremely weak, the music surpasses those constraints.