

ITALIAN SOPRANO ARIAS

Il tramonto • Un bel dì vedremo • O mio babbino caro

Maria Luigia Borsi

London Symphony Orchestra • Yves Abel



MARIA LUIGIA BORSI: Italian Soprano Arias Respighi • Puccini • Verdi • Catalani

Born in Bologna in 1879, Ottorino Respighi studied there at the Liceo Musicale as a pupil of Giuseppe Martucci, and spent two seasons as a viola player in St Petersburg, where he had lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov, a continuing influence on his work as a composer. In 1913, after the success of his two operas, *Re Enzo* and *Semirâma*, he was appointed as a teacher of composition at the Liceo Santa Cecilia in Rome. In 1919 Respighi married the singer Elsa Olivieri-Sangiaco and in 1924 he became director of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome, resigning two years later to devote himself to composition, although he continued to teach and to perform in concerts and recitals as a conductor and as an accompanist to his wife. He died in 1936.

Respighi was inspired, early in his career, by the mezzo-soprano Chiarina Fino Savio, to whom he dedicated *Il tramonto* (The Sunset). Written in 1914, the cantata takes as its text a translation by Roberto Ascoli of a poem by Shelley and is one of three such Shelley settings, with *Aretusa* and *La sensitiva*. The poem tells of a pair of lovers, separated by the early death of the young man, followed by the long sad life of the woman, patient in her sorrow. The work is scored for strings.

Giacomo Puccini, born in 1858, was a native of Lucca. Previous generations of the Puccini family had been largely concerned with church music in Lucca, but Puccini's ambitions were to turn into another direction, when he moved to Milan to pursue his operatic ambitions, inspired by a visit to Pisa in 1876 to attend a performance of Verdi's opera *Aida*. In 1884 his opera *Le Villi* won some success, but it was with *Manon Lescaut* in 1893 that his reputation seemed finally established. This was followed by a succession of operas that retain their central part in Italian repertoire. His last opera, *Turandot*, in which he sought a new challenge, was unfinished at the time of his death in 1924, but enough had been written for the work to be completed by Franco Alfano and staged in 1926.

Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, described as a Japanese tragedy, tells the story of the girl of the title, Cio-Cio-San, and her marriage to an American naval officer, Pinkerton, who has no intention of treating his relationship with her as anything but a passing amusement. Cio-Cio-San, with her young son, waits anxiously for the return of her supposed husband, Pinkerton, absent for some years, hoping, in *Un bel di vedremo* (One fine

day), that one day she will see him again. When he eventually returns, it is with his new American wife, ready to take Cio-Cio-San's son with them back to America and leaving Cio-Cio-San to suicide.

Giuseppe Verdi held an increasingly dominant position in Italian opera from his earliest success in Milan in 1842 with the opera *Nabucco* to his final opera *Falstaff* in 1893, a work based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, staged six years after his second Shakespearean opera, *Otello*. The latter has a libretto by Boito, based on Shakespeare's play *Othello*. It was first staged at La Scala, Milan, in 1887. As Othello's jealousy is about to bring about the tragic climax of the work, his wife Desdemona, in her bedroom, sings the *Willow Song*, heard from her mother's maid Barbara, betrayed by her lover. Desdemona dismisses her servant Emilia, whose words *Era più calmo?* have echoed in her mistress's head at the opening of the scene, and kneels in prayer to the Blessed Virgin.

Turandot, left incomplete at Puccini's death in 1924, is based on a *fiaba* by Carlo Gozzi. The cold-hearted Chinese Princess of the title rejects suitor after suitor, sending them to execution as they fail to answer the riddles she poses them. Calaf, son of the exiled King of Tartary, falls in love with Turandot, but is urged by Liù, the only servant who has remained loyal to the exiled king and in love with Calaf, to listen to her and not hazard his life by seeking the hand of the Princess, *Signore, ascolta* (My lord, listen to me!). Calaf answers Turandot's three riddles and poses his own, to discover his name, staking his own life again. Turandot seeks to find the name from Liù by torture, and Liù kills herself rather than reveal Calaf's name. Eventually, however, Turandot learns to love and she and Calaf are finally united.

La bohème, based on Henry Mürger's *Scènes de la vie de bohème* was first performed in Turin in 1896. Set in the Latin quarter of Paris, it centres on the love of the poet Rodolfo for the little seamstress Mimì, who becomes his mistress, after the couple have met as neighbours in the garret where Rodolfo lives with his young friends, similarly impoverished. The third act is set at a toll gate, the entrance to Paris. It is a cold dawn, with snow falling. Rodolfo complains to his friend Marcello of Mimì's behaviour, explaining how he has left her, but admitting, overheard by Mimì, that he still loves her and

realises she will die if she continues to live in the conditions that he can only afford. Mimì has heard everything, and appears, wracked by a fit of coughing. In *Donde lieta usci* (To the solitary nest), since she must die, she resolves to return to her lonely attic, and bids Rodolfo farewell. There is a brief reconciliation, but before long the lovers part again and are united only when Mimì returns to die in Rodolfo's arms.

Suor Angelica is the second of three short operas that form *Il trittico* (The Triptych), first seen in New York in 1918. Set in a convent in Siena during the seventeenth century, it deals with the fall, redemption, and final transfiguration of its central character, Sister Angelica, who has taken the veil in repentance for bearing a child out of wedlock. She is visited by her cold-hearted aunt, seeking her signature to dispose of her inheritance, and learns, only now, of the death of her son, taken from her seven years ago, to die without his mother, the subject of Angelica's aria *Senza mamma* (Without your mother), a prelude to her own suicide.

La rondine (The Swallow) was first staged in Monte Carlo in 1917 and later underwent various revisions. The courtesan Magda, concealing her real life, leaves her protector Rambaldo to live with a new young lover, Ruggero. In the first act the poet Prunier starts a song about Doretta, who rejects a king's money, but why? Magda is able to finish the song in *Chi il bel sogno di Doretta potè indovinar* (Who could have divined Doretta's wonderful dream?). The swallow returns to its nest, and Magda eventually leaves Ruggero to return to Rambaldo

and her old life, while her maid Lisette rejects her lover Prunier to resume her former rôle as Magda's maid.

Alfredo Catalani is best remembered for his 1892 opera *La Wally*. In a Tyrolean village the heroine of the title refuses to marry the man her father has chosen for her, preferring, instead, the young huntsman Haghenschach. Misunderstandings arise between them, as the story unwinds, and in jealousy she seeks to have Haghenschach killed, before relenting and saving him from the ravine where he has been propelled. As they return, Haghenschach is killed by an avalanche and Wally leaps down to her own death. In *Ebben, ne andrò lontana* (So be it! Far shall I travel), in the first act, Wally expresses her intention of leaving home, to avoid marriage to the man of her father's choice.

Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* is the third one-act opera of *Il trittico*. Based on an episode in Dante's *Inferno*, it deals with the frustration of attempts by the relatives of Buoso Donati to effect a posthumous alteration of his will in their favour by allowing the rogue Gianni Schicchi to impersonate him. His impersonation is successful enough to allow him to make himself Buoso Donati's heir. His daughter Lauretta, in *O mio babbino caro* (Oh my beloved father), pleads with her father to intervene in the affairs of Buoso Donati's relatives and her new dowry finally enables her to marry Rinuccio, nephew of a cousin of the dead man.

Keith Anderson



Photo: Brad Repp

Maria Luigia Borsi

Hailed by critics worldwide for her vocal dynamism and interpretive prowess, Italian lyric soprano Maria Luigia Borsi has forged a career that has taken her throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States. Ms. Borsi began her career as Liù in Puccini's *Turandot* at the Teatro alla Scala. She made her Venetian debut for the historic reopening of the Gran Teatro La Fenice singing the role of Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata*, conducted by maestro Lorin Maazel. She has performed at the Salzburg Festival, Zurich Opernhaus, Berlin Philharmonie, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona, New National Theatre, Tokyo, Arena di Verona, Royal Danish Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Les Chorégies d'Orange and Novaya Opera, and with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Tokyo Philharmonic, Münchner Philharmoniker and the Seoul Philharmonic. Ms. Borsi has collaborated with Riccardo Muti, Zubin Mehta, Lorin Maazel, Myung-Whun Chung, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Michel Plasson, Maurizio Benini, Carlo Rizzi, Andrés Orozco-Estrada and Robert Spano. Her discography includes a live recording of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Zubin Mehta (Helicon), a live DVD of Beethoven's *9th Symphony* with Lorin Maazel (Kultur), Puccini's *Turandot* (Fenice), Bizet's *Carmen* with Franco Zeffirelli and Peter von Winter's *Maometto* (Marco Polo 8.225279-80). Maria Luigia Borsi was born in Sora, a small town south of Rome. She studied with Antonietta Stella, Lucia Stanesco, Claudio Desderi, and Renata Scotto.

www.marialuigiborsi.com



Photo: Francesco Martinelli

Yves Abel

A frequent guest with the world's great opera companies, Yves Abel has conducted performances at the major opera houses of Europe, America and the Far East. As Principal Guest Conductor of the Deutsche Oper, Berlin, from 2005 to 2011, he conducted new productions of *Don Pasquale*, *Simon Boccanegra*, d'Albert's *Tiefland* and *Carmen*, as well as performances of *Le nozze di Figaro*, *La traviata*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *La bohème* and *Carmina Burana*. He is a frequent guest at the Vienna Staatsoper and, appointed Chief Conductor Designate of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie from 2015, he is also a regular guest with orchestras throughout Europe, in the United States and in Canada. A Franco-Canadian, he has a particular affinity with French repertoire and has won significant critical acclaim for his achievements as founder and Music Director of L'Opéra Français de New York, with which he has regenerated rare French operas and also performed the world première

of Dusapin's *To be Sung*. Since 1994, the company has performed regularly to capacity audiences at the Lincoln Center. His recordings include *Romantique*, a disc of romantic arias with Elina Garanča on Deutsche Grammophon, *Thaïs* with Renée Fleming and *Werther* with Andrea Bocelli (Decca), *Madama Butterfly* with the Philharmonia Orchestra (Chandos), and two discs of French arias, one with Susan Graham and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (Erato) and the other with Patricia Petibon and the Orchestra of the Opéra National de Lyon (Decca). In 2009 he was awarded the title Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government. www.yvesabel.com



Photo: Igor Emmerich

London Symphony Orchestra

The London Symphony Orchestra is widely regarded as one of the world's leading orchestras. Since its formation in 1904, it has featured superb orchestral musicians from all over the world, many of whom have flourishing solo, chamber music and teaching careers alongside their orchestral work. The LSO's roster of outstanding conductors includes Principal Conductor Valery Gergiev, Conductor Laureate André Previn, and Principal Guest Conductors Daniel Harding and Michael Tilson Thomas. The LSO is Resident Orchestra at the Barbican Centre in the City of London, presenting more than seventy concerts a year to its London audiences, and a further seventy concerts abroad on tour. The Orchestra has a successful annual residency at Lincoln Center, New

York, and is the international resident orchestra of La Salle Pleyel in Paris, also appearing regularly in Japan and the Far East, as well as in all the major European cities. Outside the concert hall, the Orchestra's many other activities include an energetic and ground-breaking education and community programme, a record company, a music education centre, and pioneering work in the field of digital streaming. For complete information, see: www.lso.co.uk



This recording would not have been possible without the help, trust and support of these wonderful people:

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A special thanks to violinist **Brad Repp** for the encouragement and determination in bringing so many people together in order to make this recording happen.

This recording is dedicated to Mr. Raffaele Coglianese, Sr.



Appearing here in her début solo album, Italian lyric soprano Maria Luigia Borsi has been acclaimed for her 'grace, beauty, animation and variety' (*The Sunday Times*). Her *Willow Song* from Verdi's *Otello* has been described as 'gorgeously sung' (*Opera News*) and her rôle in Puccini's *Turandot* as demonstrating 'extraordinary communicative skills' (*Opera Magazine*). This programme includes some of the most moving and dramatic arias from Italian opera, including the tragic heartbreak of *Madama Butterfly* and the shimmering beauty of Catalani's *Ebben? Ne andrò lontana* from *La Wally*.

ITALIAN SOPRANO ARIAS

Playing Time
58:40

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| 1 | Ottorino RESPIGHI (1879-1936): Il tramonto | 15:06 |
| 2 | Giacomo PUCCINI (1858-1924): Madama Butterfly: Un bel dì vedremo (Act 2) | 5:23 |
| 3 | Giuseppe VERDI (1813-1901): Otello: Era più calmo?... Mia madre aveva una povera ancella (Canzone del salice/Willow Song) – Ave Maria (Act 4) | 16:54 |
| 4 | Giacomo PUCCINI: Turandot: Signore, ascolta (Act 1) | 2:55 |
| 5 | Giacomo PUCCINI: La bohème: Donde lieta uscì (Act 3) | 3:16 |
| 6 | Giacomo PUCCINI: Suor Angelica: Senza mamma | 4:45 |
| 7 | Giacomo PUCCINI: La rondine: Chi il bel sogno di Doretta (Act 1) | 3:32 |
| 8 | Alfredo CATALANI (1854-1903): La Wally: Ebben? Ne andrò lontana (Act 1) | 4:01 |
| 9 | Giacomo PUCCINI: Gianni Schicchi: O mio babbino caro | 2:47 |

Maria Luigia Borsi, Soprano London Symphony Orchestra • Yves Abel

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