



SOPRANO SONGS AND ARIAS

O mio babbino caro • Vilja-Lied • Bailèro

Ana María Martínez

Prague Philharmonia • Steven Mercurio



ANA MARÍA MARTÍNEZ: Soprano Songs and Arias

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The present set of soprano songs and arias opens with the popular setting of Alfred de Musset's evocation of Spain by Léo Delibes. The French composer is particularly known for his ballet *Coppélia*, based on a story by E.T.A. Hoffmann, first staged in Paris in 1870. His *Flower Duet* from his opera *Lakmé* has, for various reasons, won contemporary popularity. In common with other French composers of his generation, Delibes explored the exotic, in *Lakmé* an Indian setting. His setting of de Musset's poem, *Les filles de Cadix*, with its celebration of the bolero, conjures up the spirit of Spain.

Shakespeare may have at first seemed primitive and uncouth in a French theatrical tradition that had drawn heavily on the principles of Aristotelian classicism. By the nineteenth century, however, tastes were changing, thanks to the advocacy of writers like Victor Hugo. Gounod's version of *Romeo and Juliet*, first staged in Paris in 1867, uses a libretto inevitably reduced from the original play. The opera opens with old Capulet, Juliet's father, welcoming guests to his house to a masqué ball into which Romeo and his friends will intrude. Juliet, intended as the bride of Count Paris, in her waltz-song *Je veux vivre* confides in her nurse her feelings, soon to be turned towards Romeo.

The short opera *Gianni Schicchi* forms part of a trilogy by Giacomo Puccini, first seen in New York in 1918. Based on an episode in Dante's *Inferno*, the plot, like that of Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, revolves round a deception in which Gianni Schicchi is invited by greedy relatives of a man recently dead to take the dead man's place and write a new will in their favour. He accepts the imposture, but making sure that everything will go to him, an outcome that the dead man's family dare not dispute for fear of the law. Gianni Schicchi's daughter Lauretta is in love with the gallant young Rinuccio, a member of the dead man's family, and in her famous aria *O mio babbino caro* she pleads with her father to allow her to marry the man she loves, an outcome eventually achieved, before the opera ends.

The Austrian composer Franz Lehár's famous

operetta *The Merry Widow* has a plot that also revolves around the search for wealth, in this case for patriotic reasons, as the Pontevedrin ambassador to Paris tries to ensure that the rich banker's widow Hanna Glawari does not marry abroad, removing her money from her own country. In her *Vilja-Lied* Hanna evokes the Pontevedrin spirit, recounting the legend of a forest maiden and a lovelorn huntsman. All ends happily, as it should in operetta, when Hanna marries the young Pontevedrin diplomat Danilo, who has for long secretly responded to her love for him.

Pablo Luna was a prolific writer of *Zarzuelas*. His *El Niño Judío* concerns Samuel, the Jewish boy of the title, whose poverty prevents his marriage to his beloved Concha. On his supposed father's deathbed it is revealed that Samuel is in fact the son of a rich merchant from Aleppo, kidnapped by the man he had supposed to be his father. Together with Concha and her father, he sets out to find his true father. In Aleppo, however, they learn that Samuel's real father was in fact an Indian Rajah, with whom his mother had eloped. In India the Rajah welcomes his long-lost son and is enchanted by Concha's Spanish song, *De España vengo*. The jealousy of the Rajah's wife nearly leads to disaster, from which the Rajah rescues them, sending them back to Madrid with a substantial supply of gems.

Violetas imperiales, based on a French original by Henry Roussel, after earlier cinematic treatment, appeared in 1952 as a film directed by Richard Pottier, a Franco-Spanish production. The relevance of the title is found in a plot in which a violet-seller tells the fortune of the future Empress Eugénie of France, the Spanish Eugenia de Montijo. The setting is by Francis Lopez and the song, which has a charm of its own, has won considerable popularity, not least through its commercial use.

Puccini's opera *La Rondine* has at its heart Magda, who lives with her protector Rambaldo. She was and still is in love with Ruggero, but their attempt at establishing a sure relationship in marriage is

impossible, and Magda eventually returns to Rambaldo. In the first act a young poet, Prunier, the lover of Magda's maid Lisette, sings of the story of Doretta's dream of marrying a king, but cannot end the song. Magda takes it up and provides her own conclusion in *Chi il bel sogno*. The opera was first staged in Monte Carlo in 1917.

The French composer Joseph Canteloube, a pupil of Vincent d'Indy, won a particular reputation for his musical depictions of the life of his native region, the Auvergne. He published four volumes of arrangements of songs from the Auvergne for voice and orchestra, and his fine arrangement of the pastoral *Baïlèro* is among the most effective.

Madama Butterfly, an excursion by Puccini into the exotic world of Japan, was first staged at La Scala, Milan, in 1904. Described as a Japanese tragedy, it is based on an American play, derived from an earlier story, itself having its source in a work by the French writer Pierre Loti. Cio-Cio-San, the Madama Butterfly of the title, marries an American naval officer, her sincere intentions not matched by his view of the

arrangement as purely temporary. She retains her faith in him, believing that one fine day he will return to her, but when he does it is to bring with him his new, American wife, and to take away the child she has born him. Co-Cio-San, like her father before her, kills herself. The aria *Un bel dì vedremo* is of particular poignancy, as the girl herself, a child-bride, is alone in her trust in a man whose intentions have long been obvious to all those around her.

The Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos brought together in his series of *Bachianas brasileiras* inspiration derived from Bach and from his own country. The fifth of these, for soprano and at least eight cellos, is the best known. The opening aria, with an extended vocalise, is a setting of a poem by Ruth Valadares Corrêa, while the second part offers an energetic version of a poem by Manoel Bandeira, characterized by the agility of its sometimes angular vocal line.

Keith Anderson

Ana María Martínez

The dramatic range of Ana María Martínez distinguishes her as one of today's most sophisticated lyric sopranos. Her career spans the world's opera houses, concert halls, and recording studios, and she continues to engage her audiences both with her signature rôles and with new and exciting débuts, including her appearance as Lucero in Daniel Catan's *Salsipuedes* with the Houston Grand Opera, and with her native Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center, in addition to her Metropolitan Opera début as Micaela in *Carmen*. Her engagements have included appearances at Covent Garden, Houston Grand Opera, the Paris Opéra and at the Salzburg Festival, with appearances that have taken her to the Dresden Semper Opera, the Berlin Deutsche Oper, and to the San Francisco, Vienna, Seattle, Bonn and Stuttgart operas. She has collaborated with the most distinguished colleagues and conductors and other past engagements have included performances at Montpellier, Los Angeles, New York City Opera, Minnesota, Seattle, and Washington Opera. Her discography includes the Latin Grammy award-winning recording of Albéniz's *Merlin* with Plácido Domingo, Bacalov's *Misa Tango* with Plácido Domingo, and Philip Glass' *La Belle et la Bête* and *Symphony No. 5*. Other recordings include *Pagliacci* with Andrea Bocelli, Albéniz's *Henry Clifford*, Joaquín Rodrigo's *Obra Vocal I, II, IV & V* and Daniel Catan's *Florencia en el Amazonas*. For the Naxos Milken Archive she has recorded Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Naomi and Ruth* (8.559404). A graduate of the Juilliard School with Bachelor and Master of Music degrees, Ana María Martínez won the Pepita Embil Award at the 1995 Operalia II, first prize in the 1994 Eleanor McCollum Auditions, and was a national finalist in the 1993 Metropolitan Opera National Guild Council Auditions.

Prague Philharmonia

The Prague Philharmonia was founded in 1994. The orchestra's repertoire focuses on masterpieces of the Classical and Romantic periods as well as music of the twentieth century, including works by neglected composers, rarely-played pieces, and new works by contemporary composers. From the outset, the Prague Philharmonia's Chief Conductor has been its founder Jiri Bělohlávek. Kaspar Zehnder will take over as Chief Conductor from the 2005/06 season. The Prague Philharmonia also collaborates with Principal Guest Conductor Michel Swierczewski and the young Czech conductor Jakub Hrůša. Distinguished international soloists who have collaborated with the Prague Philharmonia include Martha Argerich, Yefim Bronfman, Andras Schiff, Elisabeth Leonskaya, Maria João Pires, Fazil Say, Gerhard Oppitz, Ivan Moravec, the Duo Labèque, Sarah Chang, Shlomo Mintz, Isabelle Faust, Ivan Ženat , Heinrich Schiff, Raphael Wallfisch, David Geringas, Jiří Bartá, José Cura and Jennifer Larmore. Distinguished guest conductors have included Christopher Hogwood, David Stern, Martin Turnovsk , Libor Pešek, Tomáš Hanuš and Leoš Svárovsk . The orchestra regularly collaborates with renowned Czech singers such as Magdalena Kožená, Eva Urbanová, and Dagmar Pecková. The Prague Philharmonia appears at all the important Czech music festivals as well as at an increasingly large number of festivals throughout Europe. The orchestra has made over forty recordings for leading labels. The Prague Philharmonia operates with financial support from the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the City of Prague, its main partner CAC Leasing, a.s. and partner Ringier, a.s.

Steven Mercurio

Steven Mercurio is an internationally acclaimed conductor and composer whose musical versatility encompasses the symphonic and operatic worlds. He is also a sought after collaborator for many award winning recordings, arrangements and film projects. For the stage, he has conducted more than 45 different operas in six different languages. His engagements have taken him to many of the world's best loved opera houses including the Teatro dell'Opera, Roma, Teatro Bellini, Catania, Teatro Filarmonico, Verona, Teatro Reggion, Torino, Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, Bonn Opera, Teatro Massimo, Palermo, English National Opera as well as the American opera companies of San Francisco, Washington, Philadelphia, Seattle, Detroit, Opera Pacific, Florida Grand, Pittsburgh and Dallas. In addition to his operatic repertoire, his symphonic appearances have included the London Philharmonia, London Philharmonic, London Sinfonietta, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Luxembourg, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and the Sacramento and San Diego Symphony Orchestras, in addition to his own Spoleto Festival Orchestra. He has conducted opera and symphonic pieces for several telecasts and made a number of acclaimed recordings. Steven Mercurio's compositions include songs, chamber works, and pieces for large orchestra.



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“She turned married couples into lovers and bestowed happy dreams on the lonely. Some listeners shut their eyes and smiled blissfully”. (*Berliner Zeitung*)

The dramatic range and unusually broad repertoire of Ana María Martínez sets her apart as one of today’s most sophisticated and versatile lyric sopranos, a rising star whose career already spans the world’s great opera houses and concert halls. This recording of popular soprano songs and arias is released to mark her MET début, as Micaela in *Carmen*. For the Naxos Milken Archive of American Jewish Music Ana María Martínez has recorded Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco’s *Naomi and Ruth* (8.559404).

SOPRANO SONGS AND ARIAS

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|----|--|------|
| 1 | Léo DELIBES (1836-91): Les filles de Cadix | 3:19 |
| 2 | Charles GOUNOD (1818-93): Roméo et Juliette: Je veux vivre | 3:36 |
| 3 | Giacomo PUCCINI (1858-1924): Gianni Schicchi: O mio babbino caro | 2:39 |
| 4 | Franz LEHÁR (1870-1948): Die lustige Witwe: Vilja-Lied | 6:24 |
| 5 | Pablo LUNA (1879-1942): El Niño Judío: De España vengo | 6:02 |
| 6 | Francis LÓPEZ (1916-95): Violetas imperiales | 3:06 |
| 7 | Giacomo PUCCINI: La Rondine: Chi il bel sogno di Doretta | 3:34 |
| 8 | Joseph CANTELOUBE (1879-1937): Chants d’Auvergne: Bailèro | 7:14 |
| 9 | Giacomo PUCCINI: Madama Butterfly: Un bel dì vedremo | 5:24 |
| | Heitor VILLA-LOBOS (1887-1959):
Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5 for voice and 8 cellos: | |
| 10 | Aria (Cantilena) | 7:27 |
| 11 | Dança (Martelo) | 4:43 |

Ana María Martínez, Soprano Prague Philharmonia • Steven Mercurio

PDFs of the sung texts can be found at www.naxos.com/libretti/martinez.htm

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