

Recital

Cavalli

'Heroines of the Venetian Baroque'

Arias and excerpts from **Gli amore de Apollo e di Dafne, Artemisia, La Calisto, Il Ciro, Didone, La Doriclea, Egisto, Elena, Eliogabalo, Ercole amante, Erismena, L'Eritrea, Giasone, Hipermestra, Mutio Scevola, Le nozze di Teti e di Peleo, Orimonte, L'Orione, Oristeo, L'Ormino, Pompeo Magno, La Rosinda, Scipione africano, La Statira, La Veremonda, La virtù dei strali d'Amore** and **Xerse**
Mariana Flores sop Anna Reinhold mez Cappella
Mediterranea; Clematis / Leonardo García Alarcón
 Ricercar (F) (C) RIC359 (110' • DDD • T/t)



Cavalli composed more than 30 operas for five different Venetian theatres, and most of the scores survive.

Recordings of complete stage works are not exactly rare but constitute a drop in a very large ocean. Leonardo García Alarcón's double album 'Heroines of the Venetian Baroque' is a clever chronological narrative that draws diverse extracts (often very short) from 27 different operas dating between 1639 and 1667, most of them sung by Mariana Flores. Proci's impassioned 'Volgi, deh volgi il piede' from *Gli amori di Apollo e Dafne* has melodic leaps, moments of tormented dissonance and reiterated refrains that are reminiscent of Monteverdi's famous lament from *Arianna* (revived during the same 1640 Carnival season). Interspersed among doleful scenes are lowbrow comic complaints about Cupid from *Egisto* (1643), *L'Ormino* (1644) and *La Doriclea* (1645). Flores's softer languid singing aptly conveys a nymph's erotic longing for the return of her lover Jupiter (*La Calisto*, 1651). Isifile's lament 'Lassa, che far degg'io?' in *Giasone* (1649) is sequenced next to a vividly dramatic account of her rival Medea's incantation scene – the latter sung ardently by mezzo-soprano Anna Reinhold.

The two singers join together in a few dissimilar scenes such as the flamenco-infused depiction of a Spanish battle in *La Veremonda* (1653). Flores's depiction of the enraged Juno in *Ercole amante* (Paris, 1662) is a potent *tour de force*, whereas the simile imagery of waves is realised beautifully in the gently rolling and overlapping string

ritornellos that accompany Giulia's 'Come al mar corrono i fiumi' from *Pompeo Magno* (1666). The recital's multi-layered trajectory concludes with a quartet sung by two pairs of reunited lovers at the end of *Eliogabalo* (1667). **David Vickers**

Mozart

'Mozart and the Weber Sisters'
 Ah, vous dirai-je maman, K265³. Alcandro, lo confesso...Non so d'onde viene, K294. Dans un bois solitaire, K308³. Kanonisches Adagio, K410. Mass No 17, K427 - Et incarnatus est. Musik für einer Faschingspantomime, K446 - Adagio. Nehmt meinen Dank, K383. Les petits riens, K299b - Overture. Popoli di Tessaglia...Io non chiedo, eterni Dei, K316. Schon lacht der holde Frühling, K580. Solfeggio, K393 No 2³. Thamos, König in Aegypten, K345 - No 5, Entr'acte. Vorrei spiegarvi, o Dio, K418. Die Zauberflöte - Der Hölle Rache; Marsch der Priester
Sabine Devieille sop ³**Arnaud de Pasquale** pl/org
Ensemble Pygmalion / Raphaël Pichon
 Erato (F) 2564 60758-4 (72' • DDD • T/t)



'A Mozartian hotch-potch' was my uncharitable first reaction when

I glanced through the contents of this disc. Eating humble pie, I confess to thoroughly enjoying this 'portrait de Mozart amoureux', as French soprano Sabine Devieille dubs it: music associated with three of the four Weber sisters, of whom Aloysia (Mozart's first love) and Josefa (the first Queen of the Night) were professional singers, and Constanze his wife. On the whole, the mixed-media sequence of arias, songs and instrumental pieces, rare (including a shrouded 'Canonic Adagio' for two basset horns and bassoon) and familiar, works well, even if several have only the slenderest connection to the Webers.

Launched by a fizzing account of the overture to the Paris ballet *Les petits riens*, the programme centres around three magnificent showpiece arias for Aloysia, famed both for her expressive *cantabile* and her coloratura prowess. Among her specialities were sustained *pianissimo* high notes; and I can't imagine they were more delicately floated than they are by Sabine

Devieille, a lyric coloratura who combines a pure, sweet timbre and dazzling virtuosity. Although her Italian consonants could be sharper, Devieille also has a keen dramatic sense. In sympathetic dialogue with the oboe, she realises all the tenderness and agitation of 'Vorrei spiegarvi' (where the lovelorn Clorinda has fallen for the 'wrong' man); and in the spectacular 'Popoli di Tessaglia' she catches each fluctuation of Alceste's grief and protest in the opening recitative, then flies off into the stratosphere (up to top G, capping even the Queen of the Night's F) without shrillness or strain. The period orchestra are vivid accomplices, though with the voice forwardly recorded, wind detail can suffer in the balance.

In one of her signature roles, Devieille despatches the Queen's 'Der Hölle Rache' with terrific pizzazz, her poise *in alt* even enabling her to shade the high-wire coloratura at will. You'll hear more sheerly powerful accounts of this warhorse, but few more brilliantly sung. Elsewhere Devieille makes the coyly risqué little ariette 'Dans un bois solitaire' into a miniature drama, and brings a smiling simplicity to 'Nehmt meinen Dank', Mozart's last music for Aloysia. I confess I could have done without the *Solfège*, the singing exercise he wrote for Constanze as a preparation for the 'Christe' of the C minor Mass. And, *pace* the informative booklet-note, it's unlikely that the unfinished 'Et incarnatus' – or indeed any of the *Credo* – was performed in St Peter's Abbey in Salzburg in 1783. Still, I'm not complaining when it's sung with such radiance and grace, at a tempo that brings out the music's pastoral lilt. If you expect the disc to end here, as it says on the tin, be prepared for a shock. It might initially have you spluttering. My guess is that it would have tickled Mozart's famously antic sense of humour.

Richard Wigmore

Puccini

'Nessun dorma - The Puccini Album'

La bohème O soave fanciulla³ **Edgar Orgia**, chimera dall'occhio vitreo **La fanciulla del West** Una parola sola!...Or son sei mesi; Risparmiate lo scherno...Ch'ella mi creda libero³ **Gianni Schicchi** Avete torto!...Firenze è come un albero fiorito **Madama Butterfly** Addio, fiorito asil³ **Manon Lescaut** Donna non vidi mai; Oh, sarò la