

25 YEARS

NAXOS



UNFORGETTABLE
PERFORMANCES
ON NAXOS DVDS

Introduction

Representing almost all periods of musical history, the Naxos DVD list ranges from electric emotional dramas in early music masterpieces by Cavalli and Monteverdi, moves through the high romance of Donizetti and heroics of Verdi, right up to compelling contemporary productions such as Petitgirard's *The Elephant Man*.

Allied to strength in the sheer variety of titles listed there is substantial depth in the unique points of interest associated with each title. We focus on less familiar works by universally beloved composers such as Puccini and Schubert, world première releases such as Copland's *The City*, and revivals of forgotten masterpieces such as Rossi's *Cleopatra*.

Each opera production is produced, performed and filmed to the highest standards, with casts including internationally renowned soloists as well as exciting new discoveries. Spectacular staging and the special atmosphere at major festivals all contribute to create genuinely unforgettable visual and experiences. The majority of these releases also exist in CD format, and as such are standard-bearers in terms of sound quality.

Other titles capture unique events such as the special performance of Haydn's *Harmoniemesse* in the presence of Pope Benedict XVI, celebrate star talents like "the great Verdian bass" Carlo Colombara, make available significant but rarely seen films such as *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, or enhance annual festivities such as *Christmas with Winchester College Chapel Choir*.

Populated with a multitude of acclaimed musicians, remarkable productions and unique events, each title in the Naxos DVD catalogue is a richly rewarding highlight in its own right.

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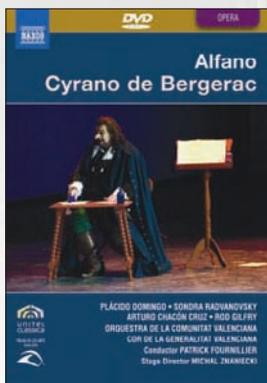
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Adamo • Alfano • Berlioz



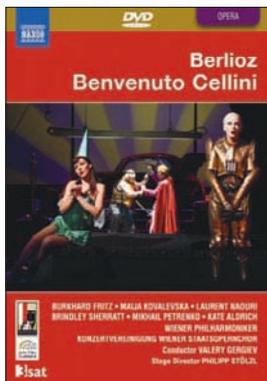
2.110613
ADAMO, M.
Little Women
 (Houston Grand Opera, 2000) (NTSC)

Based on Louisa May Alcott's enduringly popular novel about the adventures of Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy in civil-war era New England, Mark Adamo's opera *Little Women* has been performed in more than 70 national and international engagements since its 1998 première by Houston Grand Opera and has achieved the status of an American classic. This recording, with a superb cast expertly directed for television, vividly brings to life an opera that *The New Yorker* hailed as "A beautifully crafted work, brilliantly molding Alcott's tale into operatic form," and *The New York Times* dubbed a "masterpiece".



2.110270
ALFANO, F.
Cyrano de Bergerac
 (Palau de les Arts "Reina Sofia", 2007) (NTSC)

While best known today for having composed the ending to Puccini's unfinished *Turandot*, Franco Alfano wrote some dozen operas, including *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1936) with a libretto by Henri Cain based on Edmond Rostand's drama of the same name. It is a moving tale of romantic misunderstanding, swashbuckling bravado and heartbreaking loyalty, in which the eloquent Cyrano feels unable to express his love for Roxane because of his famously protuberant nose—except on behalf of his handsome but inarticulate friend, Christian. When Domingo and Radvanovsky sang Cyrano and Roxane at New York's Metropolitan Opera, *Andante* magazine wrote: "Incredibly, Cyrano is his 121st role. And it suits him splendidly...Soprano Sondra Radvanovsky was luminous as Roxane, her passionate outbursts showing off her powerful upper register to good effect".

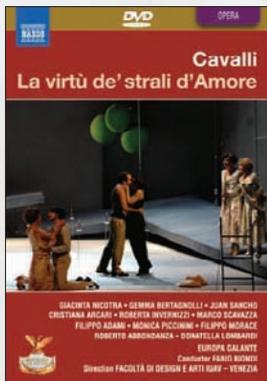


2.110271
BERLIOZ, H.
Benvenuto Cellini
 (Salzburg Festival, 2007) (NTSC)

'A mix of futurism à la *Metropolis*, fantasy à la *Batman* and quotes from Piranesi's *Carceri*, juxtaposed in the form of photo montages, enhanced with...robots, a helicopter, a shark and the winged vehicle of a pop star Pope', was how the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* described this astonishing Salzburg Festival production of Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*. The high-calibre cast, headed by Burkhard Fritz as the temperamental Renaissance artist and the 26-year-old Latvian soprano Maija Kovalevska as Teresa, the woman with whom he tries to elope, is conducted by Valery Gergiev who 'pulled out all the stops. He whips the Vienna Philharmonic into a delirium similar to that which possibly took hold of the composer'. (*Der Standard*) This is French grand opera at its fast-paced and spectacularly-staged best.



Cavalli · Colombara · Copland



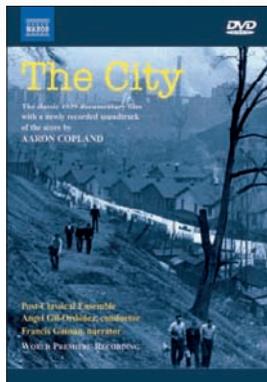
2.110614-15
CAVALLI, F.
Virtù de' Strali d'Amore
 (Teatro Malibran, 2008) (NTSC)

La virtù de' strali d'Amore was the first of ten operas Cavalli wrote with librettist Giovanni Faustini. Set in Cyprus, the plot involves enchanted and pastoral elements, love and its thwarting, the counterpointing of Man and God, sorcery, revelation and ultimate resolution, all accomplished in a brilliant series of scenes. A follower of Monteverdi, Cavalli reveals the influence of the older man but also his own pronounced independence. Fabio Biondi and Europa Galante have become one of the most admired partnerships in the history of baroque music performance.



2.110612
COLOMBARA, C.
The Art of the Bass
 (NTSC)

Described as “the great Verdian bass” (*Le Figaro*) and a “Mefistofele who stood out over all the others” (*Der Neue Merker*), Carlo Colombara brings some of the most famous bass rôles to life in this wide-ranging programme. Emotions range from the pride of Escamillo in Bizet’s *Carmen*, through the terrors of Verdi’s *Attila*, to the tender recollections of Rachmaninov’s *Aleko*. Mephistopheles strides powerfully through both Gounod and Boito’s operas, and Rossini’s comic wit contrasts with the darkness of Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*.

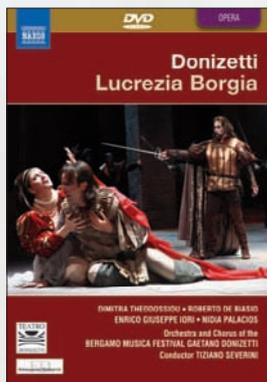


2.110231
COPLAND, A.
The City
 (NTSC)

Made for the 1939 New York World’s Fair (“The World of Tomorrow”), *The City* is a seminal documentary film distinguished for the organic integration of narration (scripted by city planner Lewis Mumford), cinematography (Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke), and music (Aaron Copland). The score, arguably Copland’s highest achievement in film, was also his ticket to Hollywood; it has been called “an astonishing missing link not only in the genesis of Copland’s Americana style but in American music and cinema” (Mark Swed, *The Los Angeles Times*). As the film contains no dialogue, it is possible to create a fresh soundtrack and discover musical riches inaudible on the original monaural recording. As Copland created no suite from *The City*, the present DVD at the same time marks the WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING of this music in its entirety.



Donizetti



2.110264
DONIZETTI, G.
Lucrezia Borgia
 (Teatro Donizetti, 2007) (NTSC)

Based on Victor Hugo's most sensational play, *Lucrèce Borgia*, a scandalous tale of murder, torture, incest, homosexuality, drunkenness and orgies, Donizetti's opera is one of the great masterpieces of Italian *bel canto* repertoire. While omitting some of its more excessive elements, the libretto by Felice Romani inspired Donizetti to compose superb arias, duets, ensembles and choruses, bringing each act to a stirring conclusion. Beautifully costumed and designed, brimming with high drama and pathos, this production stars in the infamous title rôle Greek diva Dimitra Theodossiou, praised for her stupendous acting and singing in Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux* (Naxos DVD 2.110232).



2.110268
DONIZETTI, G.
Maria Stuarda
 (Sferisterio Opera Festival, 2007) (NTSC)

In Donizetti's opera *Maria Stuarda* the rôles of the doomed queen and her cousin, Elizabeth I, have been taken by some of the greatest divas, from Malibran to Gruberova and Tosi to Baltsa, each revelling in the high drama of their tragically linked fates. "Contributing greatly to the success of the work, the young Maestro Riccardo Frizza revealed himself as a deep and sensitive interpreter of this score, managing to capture all the nuances of Donizetti's music... Laura Polverelli portrayed with elegance and pride the character of Elizabeth, her furies, doubts and jealousies; Maria Pia Piscitelli was a wonderful Maria Stuarda, passionate, sorrowful, proud, dignified when sentenced to death, recalling her past sins yet conscious of her innocence" (*MusiCultura*)

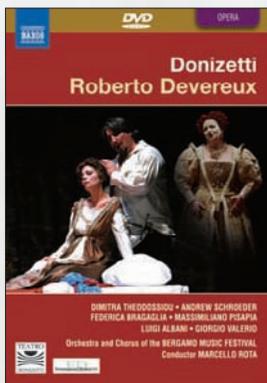


2.110616-17
DONIZETTI, G.
Marino Faliero
 (1835 edition) (Bergamo Musica Festival, 2008) (NTSC)

Donizetti's fiftieth opera, *Marino Faliero*, was first performed in Paris on 12 March 1835 with a cast comprising four of the finest singers of the period before premiering in London a few weeks later. Although these premières were both overshadowed by Bellini's *I Puritani*, *Marino Faliero* subsequently enjoyed a long and successful run of international performances throughout the 19th century before disappearing from the stage until its modern revival in 1966. Set in Venice in 1355, it remains a major work of Italian Romanticism, sentimental, martial, full of conspiratorial adventure and culminating with the execution of the leading rôle.

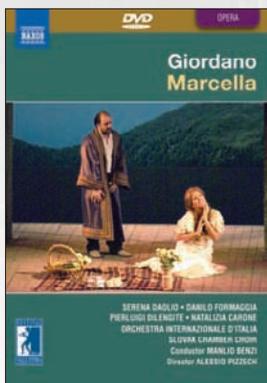


Donizetti • Giordano • Haydn



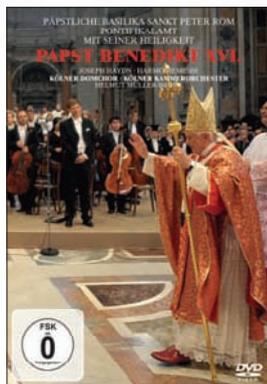
2.110232
DONIZETTI, G.
Roberto Devereux
 (Bergamo Musica Festival, 2006) (NTSC)

One of Donizetti's most emotionally raw operas, *Roberto Devereux ossia Il conte di Essex* was also the third to be loosely based on episodes in the life of Queen Elizabeth I. It deals with the love of Elizabeth and her favourite, the Earl of Essex, perhaps most tellingly expressed in the Act I duet, *Nascondi, frena i palpiti, o misero mio core* / Hide, hold back your palpitation, oh my wretched heart! Elizabeth's subsequent abdication is, however, a matter of dramatic licence, yet provides a memorable operatic conclusion to this tragedy of love and jealousy as she despairs at the death of her lover – *Quel sangue versato al ciel s'innalza* / The blood that is spilt rises up to Heaven. Directed by Francesco Bellotto, this was the inaugural production of the Bergamo Music Festival 2006, featuring the Greek soprano and leading Donizetti specialist, Dimitra Theodossiou, and the young American baritone Andrew Schroeder, both in superb voice.



2.110263
GIORDANO, U.
Marcella
 (Festival della Valle d'Itria di Martina Franca, 2007) (NTSC)

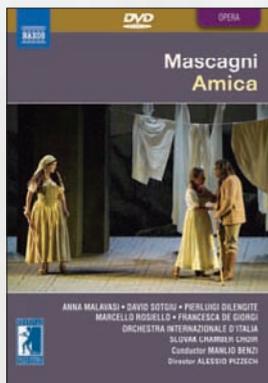
This centenary performance of Umberto Giordano's *Marcella* was prepared from the composer's manuscript, the score and parts having been destroyed during World War II. Recalling Verdi's *La Traviata* and Puccini's *La Rondine*, as well as Giordano's own *Andrea Chenier* and *Fedora*, *Marcella* is the story of a poor girl and a painter whose idyllic affair is shattered when events reveal that her true love is actually a prince incognito. "*Serena Daolio and Danilo Formaggia make an attractive couple...Formaggia sings the role [of Giorgio] with enviable freedom and certainly relishes Giordano's long-lined melodies...The supporting cast are all well cast, providing good support in the ensembles in the opening scene...a fine, creditable account of an interesting rarity.*" (MusicWeb International)



2.110272
HAYDN, J.
Mass No. 14 in B flat major, Harmoniemesse
 (Pontifical Mass with Pope Benedict XVI) (PAL)



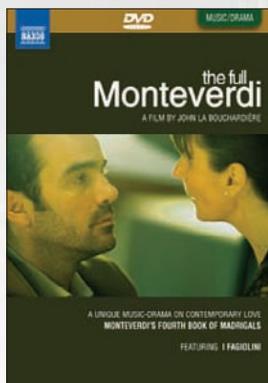
Mascagni • Monteverdi • Mussorgsky



2.110262

MASCAGNI, P.**Amica****(Festival della Valle d'Itria, 2007) (NTSC)**

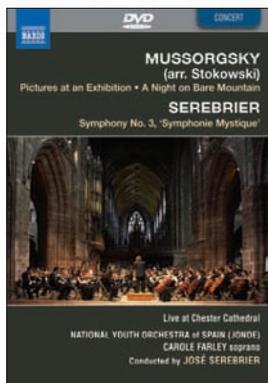
Pietro Mascagni explored many different musical styles, from the *verismo* of his ever-popular *Cavalleria rusticana* to the sentimental lyricism of *Lodoletta*. *Amica* was composed at breakneck speed, reaching completion only a month before its Monte Carlo première in 1905 conducted by the composer, and combined a return to 'realism' with a more sophisticated style of writing. Its extravagant scenic and vocal demands contributed to the opera's neglect until recent times. Set in the Savoy mountains around 1900, *Amica* is a 'dramatic poem in two acts' involving two brothers, Giorgio and Rinaldo, whose love for the same woman, Amica, culminates in tragedy. While today numbering among his least performed works, *Amica* was initially a triumph, praised for its 'passionate accent' and 'impulsive sincerity' by a contemporary critic, and deemed 'most worthy of re-evaluation' according to the composer's biographer Roger Flury.



2.110224

MONTEVERDI, C.**The Full Monteverdi
Madrigals, Book 4 (NTSC)**

Claudio Monteverdi's *Fourth Book of Madrigals* (1603) explores differing emotional states of abandoned lovers through the most dramatic and amazingly modern music for vocal ensemble. *The Full Monteverdi* follows the simultaneous break-up of six couples from shocking revelation, vengeful anger and erotic longing for reconciliation, as an ensemble film. Vulnerable and disarming, it will draw you into its emotional journey and intensely moving portrait of contemporary love.



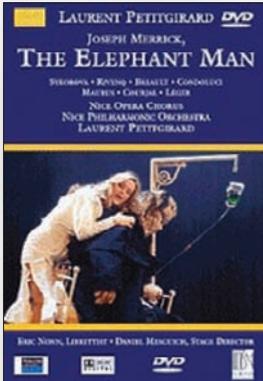
2.110230

MUSSORGSKY, M.**Pictures at an Exhibition****(arr. L. Stokowski)****SEREBRIER, J****Symphony No. 3, "Symphonie mystique"**
(NTSC)

Filed in Chester Cathedral during the National Youth Orchestra of Spain's 2007 European tour, this concert features Leopold Stokowski's inimitable and colourful transcriptions of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and *A Night on Bare Mountain*, the latter made famous by its inclusion in the 1940 Walt Disney film *Fantasia*. José Serebrier's 'Symphonie mystique', for strings, was written in the space of just one week in 2003. Serebrier's earlier recording of this work (Naxos compact disc 8.559183) was hailed by *FonoForum* magazine as "a vital, elegant masterwork... a shimmering prism of tone ... clearly formed and with a sure hand for reaching great heights of ecstasy".



Petitgirard • Puccini • Rimsky-Korsakov



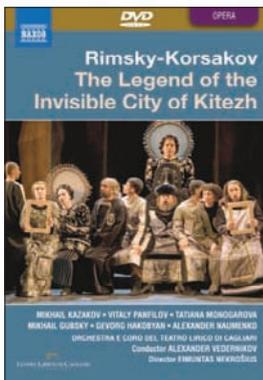
2.220001
PETITGIRARD, L.
The Elephant Man

Laurent Petitgirard is known mainly as a composer of orchestral works, including concertos, symphonic poems and film scores, and as a conductor. *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man*, his first opera, depicts the tragic story of Joseph Merrick, who was born with horrifying deformities and exploited both as a freak show exhibit and as a medical curiosity. Petitgirard's compelling and moving score—the composer's melodic gift is very much his own—shows us Merrick at different stages of his tragic life until his death aged 27 in 1890. 'The composer conducts a gripping performance of this fine opera' (Sunday Telegraph)



2.110266
PUCCHINI, G.
La Rondine
(Puccini Festival, 2007) (NTSC)

Although one of his most consistently lyrical operas, *La rondine* (The Swallow) remains one of Puccini's least known. Dissatisfied with the result of his work, Puccini wrote three versions, with two different endings, and continued to make further revisions up to his death in 1924. The innovative 2007 production at the Torre del Lago Giacomo Puccini Festival, presented on this DVD, is in effect a fourth version, which combines Acts I and II of the first version (1917), with Lorenzo Ferrero's 1994 orchestration of parts of the Finale of Act III of the incomplete third version (1921), some of which had survived only in piano score, as well as Ruggero's Act I romanza, *Parigi è la città dei desideri*, from the second version (1920).

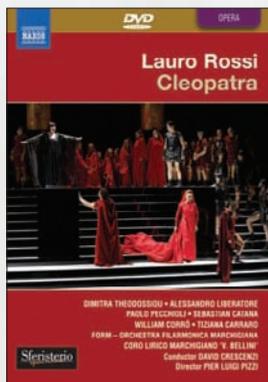


2.110277-78
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV, N.A.
The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh
(Teatro Lirico di Cagliari, 2008) (NTSC)

The Invisible City of Kitezh, completed in 1905, is a remarkable opera that fuses folklore, mysticism and realism. Its subject is the story of the advancing Mongol army's entry to Great Kitezh and the city's subsequent miraculous survival. Rejecting archaisms and the more religiously inclined suggestions of his librettist, Rimsky-Korsakov sought to create an opera that "is contemporary and even fairly advanced". It is therefore through-composed, hinting at times at Wagnerian procedure, and flooded with the composer's rich, apt and brilliant orchestral palette, fully supportive of the powerful vocal writing.



Rossi • Rossini



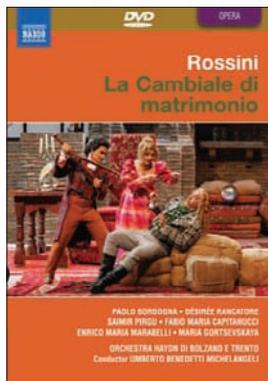
2.110279
ROSSI, L.
Cleopatra
 (Sferisterio Opera Festival, 2008) (NTSC)

First performed at the Teatro Regio, Turin, on 5 March 1876, Lauro Rossi's penultimate opera *Cleopatra* caught the public's attention in the wake of Verdi's *Aida* (1871). Like that better-known work, it contains some wonderful arias and set pieces, including a marvellous Act 1 banquet scene, Cleopatra's Act 2 aria, the thrilling ensemble that closes Act 3, and the confrontation between Cleopatra and Octavian in Act 4, all making for compelling viewing and listening. From the brooding opening scene in which Diomedes foretells the fall of Egypt to Cleopatra's death scene, this gripping grand opera by one of Italy's forgotten masters springs vividly to life in this revival filmed at the 2008 Macerata Sferisterio Festival.



2.110259
ROSSINI, G.
Il Turco in Italia
 (Rossini Opera Festival, 2007) (NTSC)

Filed live in 2007 at the prestigious Rossini Opera Festival in the composer's birthplace, Pesaro, *Il Turco in Italia* is a madcap ensemble opera with an inspired score that boasts music of both comic genius and extraordinary beauty. Set in Naples, it spins a crazy tale around a poet who uses the romantic entanglements of the inhabitants with a Turkish prince as inspiration for the plot of his next play. Ultimately, life imitates art as all ends happily, but not before a planned abduction leads to a chaotic situation of mistaken identity ... "The recitatives rollick along and really sound like drama, you can believe something is happening. I imagine that this was a brilliant evening in the theatre." (MusicWeb International on the CD release)



2.110228
ROSSINI, G.
La Cambiale di matrimonio
 (Rossini Opera Festival, Pesaro, 2006) (NTSC)

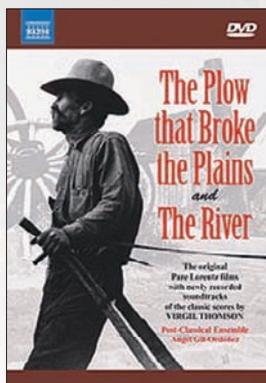
The plot of *La cambiale di matrimonio*, which Rossini composed when he was just eighteen years old, revolves around the farcical attempts of Tobia Mill, a rich English merchant, to combine business with pleasure by forcing this daughter, the lovely Fanny ("the merchandise") to marry Slook, his rich colonial correspondent from America, by means of a bill of exchange. Eventually, it is the gallant Slook himself who persuades Mill to allow Fanny to marry her true love, Edoardo Milfort. This Rossini Opera Festival—Pesaro production features two well-established singers, Désirée Rancatore and Saimir Pirgu, who are joined by three promising young singers: Fabio Maria Capitanucci, Enrico Maria Marabelli and Maria Gortsevskaya.





2.110260
SCHUBERT, F.
Alfonso und Estrella
 (Theater an der Wien, 1997) (NTSC)

An all-star cast, world-famous choir and orchestra conducted by the renowned Nikolaus Harnoncourt came together in May 1997 to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Franz Schubert's birth with a new production of his rarely performed opera *Alfonso und Estrella*. Despite his inexperience in the field, Schubert provides some of his most poignantly beautiful music, notable for its sensitive use of orchestral colour and strong vocal lines. Winner of two Emmys and many other prestigious awards, Brian Large directed this historic Vienna Festival production of one of Schubert's most ambitious major works.



2.110521
THOMSON, V.
The Plow that Broke the Plains / The River
 (NTSC)

Pare Lorentz's *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1937) are landmark American documentary films. Aesthetically, they break new ground in seamlessly marrying pictorial imagery, symphonic music, and poetic free verse, all realised with supreme artistry. Ideologically, they indelibly encapsulate the strivings of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 'New Deal'.



2.110225-26
VERDI, G.
Luisa Miller
 (La Fenice, 2006) (NTSC)

Based on Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* (*Intrigue and Love*), Verdi's tragic melodrama *Luisa Miller* revolves around the loves of the heroine of the title and Rodolfo, son of Count Walter, and the machinations of the Count's steward, Wurm, who wants Luisa for himself, resulting in the death of all three. Directed by Arnaud Bernard, who took as his inspiration Bernardo Bertolucci's 1976 film *1900*, this La Fenice production is led by the outstanding Bulgarian soprano Darina Takova whose intense characterization of Luisa emphasizes the heroine's inner torture, and Giuseppe Sabbatini who brings a thrilling theatricality to the rôle of Rodolfo, especially in the most famous aria from the opera, *Quando le sere al placido*.

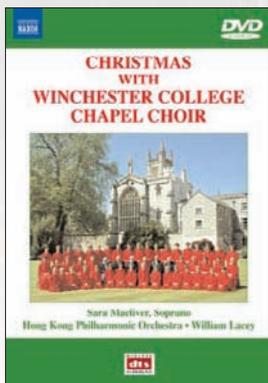


Verdi • Winchester College Chapel Choir • Wolf-Ferrari



2.110258
VERDI, G.
Macbeth
 (Sferisterio Opera Festival, 2007) (NTSC)

Verdi was justifiably pleased with *Macbeth*, his tenth opera and his first on a Shakespearian subject – it would long remain his own favourite among his 'early period' operas. Eighteen years later, at the invitation of the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris, he substantially revised the score, and this version (sung in Italian) is presented here in Pier Luigi Pizzi's visually arresting 2007 production. The talented young cast is headed by Giuseppe Altomare as Macbeth, one of Verdi's most profoundly modern anti-heroes – a political animal driven to bloody regicide yet doomed by his very success – with Olha Zhuravel as his obsessively ambitious wife, driven to madness by her own guilt.



2.110512
Christmas with Winchester College Chapel Choir
 (NTSC)

This selection of music for Christmas brings together East and West in the collaboration of Winchester College Chapel Choir and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. Recorded live in Hong Kong in December 2004, this disc features a selection of perennial favourites from the Baroque period, including Bach cantatas and Handel's *Messiah*, and three exquisite modern carols.



2.110234-35
WOLF-FERRARI, E.
La Vedova scaltra
 (La Fenice, 2007) (NTSC)

Wolf-Ferrari's comic opera *La vedova scaltra* (The Cunning Widow), is among the works he based on plays by Goldoni. It matches closely the conventions of 18th-century *opera buffa* in its witty if sceptical look at the mechanisms governing the interplay of human relations. Four hopeful suitors, English, French, Spanish and Italian, vie for the hand of Rosaura, the cunning widow of the title, who disguises herself to meet each wooer, eventually choosing the only one who can demonstrate his sincerity. This production, filmed live at the Teatro La Fenice in February 2007 in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Goldoni in Venice in 1707, is the first to appear on DVD.



Also Available:

<http://www.naxos.com/segmentcatalogues.asp>

