

## Mirella Freni – Songs My Mother Taught Me (1999)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 16 September 2014 15:51 -

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1 *Ombra mai fu (Largo) da Serse (G.F. Haendel)* 3:43 2 *Ninna nanna (W.A. Mozart)* 3:35 3 *Ave Maria (F. Schubert)* 5:28 4 *Wiegenlied (F. Schubert)* 3:30 5 *Maria Wiegenlied Op.76 n.52 (Max Reger)* 2:29 6 *Ninna nanna (J. Brahms)* 3:38 7 *Ave Maria (Bach-Gounod)* 4:08 8 *Als die Alte Mutter Op.55 n.4 (A. Dvorak)* 2:51 9 *La carità da trois choeurs religieux (G. Rossini)* 6:20 10 *Ninna nanna di Modigliana (F. Balilla Pratella 1886-1955)* 3:07 11 *Ninanana (F. Balilla Pratella)* 4:14 Mirella Freni – soprano Orchestra E Coro Ente Autonomo Teatro Comunale Di Bologna Leone Magiera - conductor

The Italian soprano, Mirella Freni (born: Mirella Fregni), was born into a working class family in Modena (both her mother and tenor Luciano Pavarotti's mother worked in the same cigarette factory in that city). She was a musically gifted child and sang *Un bel dì vedremo* in a radio competition at age ten. The tenor Beniamino Gigli warned her, however, that she risked ruining her voice and advised her to give up singing until she was older. She resumed singing at age 17.

Mirella Freni made her operatic debut in Modena at 1955, at age 19, as Micaëla in Georges Bizet's *Carmen*. She was offered many roles after this, but she decided to put her career aside and marry her singing teacher, Leone Magiera, and have a child. She resumed her career in 1958 by winning a singing competition and singing Mimì in Puccini's *La Bohème* at the Teatro Regio in Torino. She then sang with the Netherlands Opera during the 1959-1960 season. Her international breakthrough came when she sang Adina in Franco Zeffirelli's staging of Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* at Glyndebourne, where she also sang the Mozart comic roles of Susanna and Zerlina during the 1960-1962 seasons.

In 1961, Mirella Freni made her Royal Opera House debut as Nannetta in Verdi's *Falstaff*. In 1963, she made her debut at La Scala, in a production staged by Zeffirelli and conducted by

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Herbert von Karajan (Freni went on to become one of Herbert von Karajan's favourite singers, and she collaborated with him in numerous operas and concerts). In 1965, she made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Mimì, and later appeared there as Liù in Puccini's *Turandot*, as well as Marguerite in *Faust* and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*.

From the early 1970's into the 1980's, Mirella Freni began singing heavier Verdi roles, notably Elisabetta in *Don Carlo*, Desdemona in *Otello*, and Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra*, Elvira in *Ernani*, Leonora in *La forza del destino*, and the title role of *Aida*. She also added the Puccini heroines of *Manon Lescaut* and *Tosca* to her repertory, and recorded *Madama Butterfly* as well as all three roles of *Il trittico*. She also starred in a film of *Madama Butterfly* opposite Plácido Domingo as B.F. Pinkerton. In 1976 she starred memorably as Susanna in a filmed production of *Le Nozze di Figaro* (also starring Kiri te Kanawa and Hermann Prey) by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle.

In 1981, Mirella Freni married Nicolai Ghiaurov, one of the leading operatic basses of the post-war period. Together they helped establish the Centro Universale del Bel Canto in Vignola, where they started giving master-classes in 2002. Following Ghiaurov's death in 2004, Freni continued their work in preserving the Bel Canto tradition, and currently teaches young singers from around the world.

Mirella Freni published a memoir, *Mio Caro Teatro* in 1990. She was also awarded the order Cavaliere della Gran Croce della Repubblica Italiana that year and the French Légion d'Honneur in March 1993. The University of Pisa awarded her an honorary degree in 2002 for "her great contribution to European culture."

Mirella Freni is much admired for the youthful quality of her voice and her acting skills. Her repertoire encompasses some forty roles, Verdi and Puccini in particular but also Mozart and Tchaikovsky. She continued to add to her repertory well into the 1990's with Italian verismo, taking on the title roles of Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur* in Milan, Paris, Barcelone and New York and Giordano's *Fedora* in London, Milan, New York, Torino, Barcelone and Zürich. In 1998, she performed Giordano's *Madame Sans-Gêne* in Catania. During this time she also ventured into the Russian operas of Tchaikovsky, appearing as Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin*, Lisa in *The Queen of Spades*, and Ioanna in *Orleanskaya Deva*. In 2005, the Metropolitan Opera celebrated the 40th anniversary of her Met debut and her 50th anniversary on the stage with a special gala concert conducted by James Levine. She ended her professional career on stage with *Orleanskaya Deva* at the Washington National Opera on April 11, 2005, performing the teenager Ioanna (Joan of Arc) at 70 years of age. --- bach-cantatas.com

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