

Baldassare Galuppi - La Diavolessa (2004)

Written by bluesever

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Disc 1: Act I 1. Sinfonia 2. Duetto: Ho risolto, voglio andar 3. Recitativo: Che c'è, che c'è di nuovo 4. Cavatina a 3: Se non fossi maritato 5. Recitativo: Eh ben Signor Consorte 6. Recitativo: Pretendono i mariti 7. Aria: S'inganna chi crede 8. Recitativo: Oh! Ci mancava adesso 9. Aria: Una donna che apprezza il decoro 10. Recitativo: Serva di Don Poppone! 11. Aria: Si distingue dal nobile il vile 12. Recitativo: In questo mi rimetto 13. Aria: Chi v'ha detto del tesoro 14. Recitativo: Io non la so capire 15. Aria: Colle dame, colle dame 16. Recitativo: Si può venir? 17. Aria: Il cielo vi precipiti 18. Recitativo: Messer Falco gentil 19. Recitativo: Riverente m'inchino! 20. Recitativo: Un simil trattamento 21. Aria: Tenta invan co' suoi vapori 22. Recitativo: Il Signor Don Poppone 23. Recitativo: Saprebbe dirmi 24. Recitativo: Non vorrei che Giannino 25. Finale 1: Conte mio, per tutti i titoli

Disc 2: Act II 1. Recitativo: Strepiti, precipizi? 2. Recitativo: Che tremore è mai questo? 3. Aria: Chi son io, pensate prima 4. Recitativo: Che diavolo ha con me 5. Aria: Un tenero affetto 6. Recitativo: A me doppia fortuna 7. Aria: Falco mio, Falco mio 8. Recitativo: Come s'è innamorato 9. Aria: Se con quell'occhio moro 10. Recitativo: Signor, la sposa mia 11. Recitativo: Chi son questi superbi? 12. Aria: M'han lasciato in testamento 13. Recitativo: Per esempio 14. Aria: Sior come generoso 15. Recitativo: La testa non so più dove 16. Recitativo: Pur mi lusingo e spero 17. Aria: Donna belle, che bramate 18. Recitativo: Ritiratevi pur con questo lume 19. Recitativo: Siete qui? 20. Finale II: Spiriti erranti...

Act III

21. Recitativo: Offerirmi denar 22. Recitativo: Maledetti stregoni 23. Aria: Com'è stato dir non so 24. Recitativo: Il misero è ingannato 25. Aria: Più bel diletto 26. Recitativo: Tant'è, signori miei 27. Aria: Sì Signori, così è 28. Recitativo: Che bell'amor 29. Recitativo: Siete qui? 30. Aria: Veleggiar secondo il vento 31. Recitativo: Dunque sperar possiamo 32. Duetto: Oh povero mio padre 33. Recitativo: No, non credo mai più 34. Finale III: Spiriti buoni, qua comparite

Dorina – Kremena Dilcheva (alto) Giannino, her lover – Matthias Vieweg (baritone) Falco, hotel owner – Tom Allen (tenor) Count Natri – Johnny Maldondo (alto) Countess Natri – Bettina Pahn (soprano) Don Poppone, a nobleman – Egbert Junghanns (bass) Ghiandina, his housekeeper – Doerthe Maria Sandmann (soprano) Lautten Compagny Berlin Conductor - Wolfgang Katschner

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For quite a number of people Galuppi will be most familiar, not for his music, but for Robert Browning's poem 'A Toccata of Galuppi's'. In fact Galuppi started out as a keyboard player and arranger of Neapolitan opera buffa. He then went on to write opera seria, a form in which he was very successful. But in the 1740s he began to experiment, unsuccessfully, with opera buffa. Then in 1749 he produced an opera buffa to a libretto by the dramatist Goldoni. Both men would continue to write other types of drama; Goldoni pursued a successful career as a dramatist and Galuppi wrote further opera seria. But their collaboration on opera buffa was a notable one; they would write a total of 17 operas together. Goldoni would play a significant role in the widening and development of the form; his libretti provided Galuppi with a wide range of subjects, arias in a variety of metres, ensembles and grand finales. Galuppi's settings give a significant prominence to the libretto, his arias rely less on virtuosity than those in opera seria; characterisation becomes more important. Galuppi was particularly good at seizing the opportunities that Goldoni provided in his finales; for the operas Galuppi would create a series of multi-part finales, each finale a chain of contrasting short sections, each one building on the rest. It was a model that was widely imitated by Haydn and Mozart.

But, like many innovators, the Galuppi-Goldoni operas have been eclipsed by the operas of those who built on their developments. So this recording of Galuppi and Goldoni's 13th collaboration is most welcome. 'La Diavolessa' was first performed in 1755 in Venice at a theatre renowned for its spoken drama. The plot revolves around a pair of lovers Dorina (Kremena Dilcheva, alto) and Giannino (Matthias Vieweg, baritone). They are unable to marry and have run away, but are now running out of money and Dorina threatens to leave. Giannino is hoping for his father's speedy demise in order to inherit some money. They are living at a hotel in Naples run by Falco (Tom Allen, tenor). Falco, charmed by Dorina suggests that they try and dupe Don Poppone (Egbert Junghanns, bass), who has spent years trying to excavate a treasure. Falco plans to present Dorina and Giannino as experts.

Count Nastri (Johnny Maldondo, alto) and his wife (Bettina Pahn, soprano) also arrive at the hotel; the count is also charmed by Dorina and his wife threatens to leave. But they are invited as guests at Don Poppone's. The Don is not happy about the Count's visit as it gets in the way of his treasure hunting. The Don takes Giannino and Dorina to be the Count and Countess and then presumes that the Count and Countess are the so-called experts. The resulting confusions are played out over the remaining acts.

The opera is prefixed by a short sinfonia, which is played engagingly by the orchestra. The arias are lively with some charming melodic ideas and with lucid accompaniments. The orchestral ritornello are often imaginatively scored and the orchestra of the Lauten Compagny relish their opportunities. But Galuppi's music seems to remain constantly at the service of the text and the drama; I never really felt that it took wing and became truly memorable in its own right. The most notable section is the Act 2 finale, where Giannino and Dorina are disguised as

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devils and participate in the raising of the 'treasure'; here Galuppi has produced some 'fantastic' music which chimes in with the drama but which creates its own momentum as well.

The recording seems to have been made after a series of staged performances; the booklet is copiously illustrated with production photos. As a result, the cast are all comfortable with the drama and project Goldoni's text in a credible and dramatic fashion. This is the sort of opera which benefits immeasurably from being sung in the audience's language and I would love to hear a good English version; but for an international audience this original language performance is highly creditable. All the singers are securely within their roles and make the most of Galuppi's pretty arias, with their dance-like rhythms.

Dilcheva and Vieweg are charming as the scheming pair which is a pleasure as the entire plot revolves around their ability to charm themselves out of their situations. The Count and Countess have slightly more serious roles and Pahn sings the Countess with an attractive bright soprano voice. The role of the Count was intended to be sung by a woman as a breeches role, but here it is played by counter-tenor Johnny Maldondo. His arias are some of the most serious in the opera and I felt that Maldondo did not do them justice. Though not as virtuoso as his opera seria, the music does require some virtuosity. Here Dilcheva and Pahn rather let the recording down as their fioriture is a little smudged. But Tom Allen, as the inn-keeper Falco, and Doerthe Maria Sandmann, as Don Poppone's housekeeper, both provide notable coloratura in the context of some fine characterisation. The allocation of voice types is interesting as it does not quite conform to later practices with the major roles going to tenor and soprano and the alto and baritone being more supporting characters.

This is a creditable performance, well paced by Wolfgang Lautner. If not quite perfect, it well enables us to appreciate the strengths (and weaknesses) of Galuppi and Goldoni's opera, and to allow us to learn more about one of the 18th century's notable collaborations. ---Robert Hugill, musicweb-international.com

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