

Magdalena Kozena - Mozart Arias (2006)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Le nozze di Figaro* K. 492 *Giunse alfin il momento Deh vieni, non tardar, o gioia bella*
02. *Le nozze di Figaro* K. 492 *Voi che sapete che cosa e amor* 03. *Le nozze di Figaro* K. 492
Non so piu cosa son, cosa faccio 04. *Le nozze di Figaro* K. 492 *Giunse alfin il momento Al*
desio di chi t'adora K. 577 05. *Così fan tutte* K. 588 *In uomini, in soldati* 06. *Così fan tutte* K.
588 *Ei parte... Sentil!... Ah, no! Per pietà, ben mio, perdona* 07. *Così fan tutte* K. 588 *E amore*
un ladroncello 08. *La clemenza di Tito* K. 621 *Non piu di fiori vaghe catene* 09. *Idomeneo* K.
366 *Quando avran fine omai Padre, germani* 10. *Ch'io mi scordi di te Non temer, amato bene*
K. 505 11. *Vado, ma dove o Dei!* K. 583 12. *Alma grande, e nobil core!* K. 578
Magdalena Kožená - mezzo-soprano Jos van Immerseel - fortepiano Orchestra of the Age of
Enlightenment Simon Rattle - conductor

The simultaneous release of this pair of discs effectively allows us to hear two of today's more glamorous divas going head to head in similar programmes. Their reputations in the UK are, however, unequal: Magdalena Kozena, much hyped, is, of course, comparatively familiar; Anja Harteros has done too little in this country since she won Cardiff Singer of the World in 1999.

Hearing them in close proximity, one's first impression is that Kozena has the more evenly produced voice, while Harteros is dramatically more spontaneous. The centrepiece of each disc is *Per Pietà*, Fiordiligi's act two aria from *Così Fan Tutte*. Kozena sounds carefully and sorrowfully beautiful in it. Harteros's silvery tone can harden under pressure, though she more vividly communicates the nature of Fiordiligi's emotional and moral hell. This is not the whole story, however, for when we turn to the rest of their respective programmes, we find Kozena aspiring to a greater range of mood than Harteros, though she is by no means as consistently successful.

Harteros keeps herself within the bounds of the serious and the tragic. Her disc begins and

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ends with delirium, framing a succession of portraits of wronged women with the lurching mania of Elettra in Idomeneo and the derangement of Haydn's Scena di Berenice, both unforgettable in their self-lacerating power. Kozena, in contrast, opens and closes her disc with alternative versions of Susanna's wedding night aria from Figaro, and explores differing facets of Mozartian sensuality in between.

Not all of it works. She's no Vitellia, whose big rondo is unaccountably po-faced. Her Cherubino, meanwhile, is over-embroidered and mannered. On the other hand she reveals a staggering and unexpected flair for comedy. Her Dorabella is well nigh breathless with nervous excitement. Best of all is her Despina, pouring scorn on masculine pretensions with unashamed glee.

Kozena's conductor is her partner, Simon Rattle, whose approach to Mozart is gracious and sometimes lightweight. Harteros has Pinchas Steinberg, grander in manner and occasionally solid. Which disc you prefer is ultimately a matter of taste. Kozena's fans won't be disappointed. But don't ignore Harteros - she's a fine artist. ---Tim Ashley, theguardian.com

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