

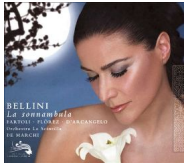
## Bellini – Sonambula (Bartoli) [2009]

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## Bellini – Sonambula (Bartoli) [2009]



CD1: 1. Act 1 - Introduzione 1:35 2. Act 1 - Viva! Viva Amina! 1:06 3. Act 1 - Tutto è Gioia, Tutto è Festa 3:34 4. Act 1 - Viva Amina 3:51 5. Act 1 - Care Compagne, E Voi, Teneri Amici 2:07 6. Act 1 - Come Per Me Sereno Oggi Rinacque Il Di! 3:10 7. Act 1 - Sovra Il Sen La Man Mi Posa 4:25 8. Act 1 - Io Più Di Tutti, O Amina, Teco Mi Allegro 1:57 9. Act 1 - Perdona, O Mia Diletta, Il Breve Indugio 2:39 10. Act 1 - Prendi: l'anel Ti Dono 4:58 11. Act 1 - Ah! Vorrei Trovar Parola 5:31 12. Act 1 - Domani Appena Aggiorni, Ci Recheremo Al Tempo 1:58 13. Act 1 - Vi Ravviso, O Luoghi Ameni 5:36 14. Act 1 - Contezza Del Paese Avete Voi, Signor? 2:43 15. Act 1 - A Fosco Cielo, A Notte Bruna 3:04 16. Act 1 - Basta Così 1:43 17. Act 1 - Elvino! E Me Tu Lasci? 2:05 18. Act 1 - Son Geloso Del Zefiro Errante Che Ti Scherza 3:15 19. Act 1 - Ah! Costante Nel Tuo, Nel Mio Seno 4:13

CD2: 1. Act 1 - Davver, Non Mi Dispiace D'essermi Qui Fermato 3:40 2. Act 1 - Che Veggio? Saria Forse Il Tremendo Fantasma? 2:20 3. Act 1 - Oh Ciel! Che Tento? 3:25 4. Act 1 - Osservate, L'uscio è Aperto 2:24 5. Act 1 - E Menzogna 2:01 6. Act 1 - D'un Pensiero E D'un Accento Rea Non Son 4:32 7. Act 1 - Non Più Nozze 3:03 8. Act 2 - Introduzione 1:20 9. Act 2 - Qui La Selva è Piu Folta Ed Ombrosa 3:50 10. Act 2 - Larghetto Maestoso 3:15 11. Act 2 - Reggimi, O Buona Madre 2:37 12. Act 2 - Vedi O Madre, è Afflitto E Mesto 4:03 13. Act 2 - Viva Il Conte! 1:12 14. Act 2 - Ah! Perché Non Posso Odiarti 4:37 15. Act 2 - Lasciarmi: Aver Compreso Assai dovresti Che Mi Sei Noioso 1:06 16. Act 2 - Lisa è La Sposa... 0:54 17. Act 2 - De' Lieti Auguri A Voi Son Grata 3:15 18. Act 2 - E Fia Pur Vero, Elvino, Che Alfin Dell'Amor Tuo Degna Mi Credi? 1:58 19. Act 2 - Signor Conte, Agli Occhi Miei Negar Fede Non Poss'io 4:47 20. Act 2 - Lisa Mendace Anch'Essa 3:59 21. Act 2 - Signor?... Chi Creder Deggio? 2:20 22. Act 2 - Oh Se Una Volta Sola Rivederlo Io Potessi 4:45 23. Act 2 - Ah! Non Credea Mirarti Si Presto Estinto, O Fiore 5:03 24. Act 2 - Non Più Non Reggo Cecilia Bartoli 1:53 25. Act 2 - Ah! Non Giunge Cecilia Bartoli 3:34

Cecilia Bartoli (Amina),  
Juan Diego Florez (Elvino), Liliana Nikiteanu (Teresa), Ildebrando d'Archangelo (Il Conte Rodolfo), Gemma Bertagnoli (Lisa), Peter Kalman (Alessio) Chor des Opernhauses Zürich  
La Scintilla Alessandro de Marchi – conductor

As I wrote in March 2008, “There are many recordings of La sonnambula, but none is perfect.” The situation remains unchanged, though this latest recording has a great many positive

aspects. For a start, it is complete, with decorated second verses for the cabalettas, and even the duet for two trumpets before Elvino's aria. An editorial note tells us that the new critical edition was used, with three transpositions downward (the two duets for Amina and Elvino and Elvino's aria), which means that listeners following with the standard Ricordi score will hear what they see on the page and not the manuscript's higher keys, unlike the Dessay recordings which make further transpositions downwards. (For further information, see my Critics' Corner in May 2008.) This is also the first recording of *Sonnambula* using a "period" orchestra, though not the first Bellini opera. The orchestra plays at 430 Hz, which means that the music sounds a quartertone lower than what the eye sees on the page. Alessandro de Marchi's broad experience of the operatic world stands him in good stead, though his occasional frenetic pacing may seem exaggerated. Curiously, one of the most important instruments in this version is the triangle, whose reverberations—reminiscent of Alpine bells?—linger after many of the ensembles.

The new recording puts to rest the notion of a Malibran version of the opera, though it is strange that Adrian Mourby's notes constantly refer to Malibran and Pasta as mezzo-sopranos. I would suggest that they conform more to Grace Bumbry's description of herself as "a singer who uses all of her voice" (to which list one might add Shirley Verrett or Jessye Norman). And those extensions up to high D and E $\flat$  are certainly not within the range of most mezzos. Bearing all this in mind, Cecilia Bartoli encompasses all the notes but that E $\flat$ , sings "Ah non giunge" with a plainer first verse than written as is now the custom, but lacks the simplicity or courage to let the music speak for itself. The affectations often get in the way of communication, whether the confidential breathiness or the need to literally palpitate while singing the word "palpitar." In the theater one might react differently, as one is dealing with several elements and not only the musical execution. Juan Diego Flórez matches his other performances in both expressivity and technique, though the tone itself is monochromatic. Ildebrando d'Arcangelo's Rodolfo is occasionally stentorian, but that may also be a question of microphone placement. Gemma Bertagnoli's Lisa makes the most of her two little arias, occasionally emulating Bartoli's breathiness in her first aria. Liliana Nikiteanu's Teresa, like many another singer of this role, is slightly troubled at the higher reaches but is otherwise sympathetic in her defense of her daughter.

For the first time, here is what the French would call an almost "philologically" correct performance of *Sonnambula*, but it is more than just that as it is full of life, whatever criticisms one may have of individual elements. It certainly belongs at the top of the list of recorded versions, with a strong recommendation of the Bernstein/Callas recording, however awful the sound, however hard the chorus struggles with the conductor's tempos, but Callas is clearly the role model for Amina, and she and Bernstein are absolutely demented in the cabalettas. Cesare Valletti's tenor is more limited than that of Flórez (few high notes), but he achieves greater tonal variety. ---Joel Kasow, arkivmusic.com

This recording of La Sonnambula is notable on a number of fronts. It's the first recording of the opera based on a 2004 critical edition of the score that confirms the leading role was indeed written for a mezzo-soprano, although it has been performed by sopranos for much of its history. (Among the first Aminas were the celebrated mezzos Giuditta Pasta and Maria Malibran.) It's also the first recording using period instruments, in this case Orchestra La Scintilla, based at the Basel Opera and conducted by Alessandro de Marchi in an idiomatic and lively reading. And, as the promotional materials trumpet, it's the first recorded collaboration between superstars Cecilia Bartoli and Juan Diego Flórez. Although less hoopla is made of him, the recording also features a superbly lyrical performance by baritone Ildebrando D'Arcangelo. Flórez has the ideal voice for this repertoire: warmly Latinate, supple, and passionately inflected. It's a revelation to hear a mezzo with Bartoli's range in the role. She handles its upper reaches with solidity, agility, and complete assurance (although several arias in fact transposed down, but with no loss of impact), and the depths to which she descends are astonishing. Her tender and vulnerable Amina is completely convincing. She and Flórez have a nice chemistry, and their interactions are among the highlights of the recording. The performers in the secondary roles, Gemma Bertagnolli, Liliana Nichiteanu, and Peter Kálmán, are all first-rate. The chorus of townspeople, which has an unusually large part in the goings-on, is sung with spirit by the Chorus of the Opernhaus Zürich. The sound is clean and full, but on the loud side, so the volume may require some adjustment. The novelty of this version and the quality of performances make this a recording that should be of strong interest to fans of the bel canto repertoire and would make a fine introduction for listeners new to the opera. ---Stephen Eddins, Rovi

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