

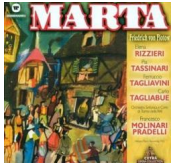
## Friedrich von Flotow – Martha (1953)

Wpisany przez bluesever

Czwartek, 22 Październik 2009 15:10 - Zmieniony Czwartek, 14 Listopad 2013 17:13

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Enrichetta (Martha) - Elena Rizzieri Sir Tristano Mickleford - Bruno Carmassi Plumkett - Carlo Tagliabue Lionello - Ferruccio Tagliavini Nancy - Pia Tassinari Sheriff of Richmond - Mario Zorogniotti A servant - Alberto Albertini Coro e Orchestra della RAI di Torino Francesco Molinari-Pradelli, 1953

Friedrich, Freiherr von Flotow (1812-1883), was born of an aristocratic family in one of the small German states that abounded before the creation of modern Germany in 1870. He was intended to go into diplomatic service. He escaped from that fate by diving into music--and French-oriented music, mind you, in the line of Auber and Meyerbeer, not the Germanic line of Weber and Wagner (his almost exact contemporary.) He seems to have written about thirty operas, although nobody is quite sure of the exact number. Of them, only two survive on stage. "Alessandro Stradella" (1844), often described as an operetta, occasionally earns a revival and then returns to fairly well deserved obscurity--except for one warhorse aria for concertizing tenors. "Martha" (1847), on the other hand, continues as a member of the standard operatic repertory in the German-speaking lands and to a lesser degree in Italy. In the rest of the world, it once enjoyed great popular success, although it presently sits just beyond the limits of the standard repertory, being revived from time to time as something of a tuneful museum piece.

"Martha" is, indeed, a tuneful and charming comic opera (you can ignore the "semiseria" description) set in England during the time of Queen Anne. It premiered during the Christmas season of 1847 in Vienna, but the fully bi-lingual Flotow also launched the opera almost simultaneously Italy. "Martha" is best known for two arias. One of them is a standard concert chestnut for lyric tenors, known equally as "Ach! so Fromm" or "M'appari tutta amor." In actual fact, that aria was written for an entirely different opera and didn't even make it into the score of "Martha" until 1865. The other hit tune has an even odder background. It wasn't composed by Flotow. He simply quoted a well-known Irish folk song, made famous a full generation before the premiere of the opera by the Irishman, Tom Moore, who was a singer, composer, poet, literary executor of Lord Byron (and the spineless jellyfish who allowed that great poet's

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self-serving family to burn his racy memoirs after his death). Moore put English words to the old tune and it has been known ever since as "The Last Rose of Summer."

"Martha" is considerably more than a two-aria opera, however. It has a fine, sparkling overture and is sprightly from beginning to end. (I find it puzzling that "Martha," with all this, has practically vanished while that ripe piece of tripe, "Lakme," with its two bearable numbers--one of them wholly out of phase with the rest of the opera--not only survives but thrives.)

This 1955 recording presents "Martha" in its Italian form, with Italian singers, orchestra and conductor, as "Marta" (with the English name "Plunkett" transformed into "Plumkett" to sit more easily on Italian tongues.) The cast is unusually strong and shows the best of the old CETRA.

Ferruccio Tagliavini (1913-1995), opera singer, movie star and sometime heartthrob was, for a few years and within narrowly defined limits, very nearly a perfect lyric tenor. This recording catches him at just about the time he began to abandon the purely lyric roles for the heavier tenor parts. His stage career would come to an end only a decade later.

Pia Tassinari (1903-1995) was married to Tagliavini and recorded extensively with him. She could be effective in a surprisingly wide variety of parts for an Italian soprano. Her few recorded Wagnerian excerpts, for instance, are good enough to make me wish that she had done more along that line. Her voice darkened with time. Her last major recording, to my knowledge, had her as the mezzo Ulrica in Verdi's "Ballo in maschera."

Carlo Tagliabue (1898-1978) was a fine baritone whose career straddled World War II. This recording is late for him but in the mid-1950s he was still good enough to step in to record his second complete "Forza del destino," this time with Callas, and as a hasty replacement for Gobbi who had dropped out just before recording was to begin.

Elena Rizzieri was a light-voiced soprano with a primarily Italian career. It was her fate to be coupled with heavier-voiced sopranos, as she is here with Tassinari, as well as in the parts of Michaëla in "Carmen" and Liu in "Turandot."

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As Mr. Moore in the previous Amazon review pointed out, "Marta" is a small treasure from CETRA. The recital of lyric tenor material from Tagliavini is pure gold and tossed in as an extra. Grab it while you can. --- L. E. Cantrell, amazon.com

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