

**Gioachino Rossini - La Donna del Lago (1992)**



ATTO PRIMO/ACT ONE/ERSTER AKT/PREMIER ACTE N. 1 Sinfonia E Introduzione 1-1  
*Del Di la Messaggiera (Coro) 4:37 1-2 Oh Mattutini Albori! (Elena) 3:48 1-3 Qual Suon!*  
*(Elena, Uberto) 6:19 1-4 Uberto! Ah! Dove T'ascondi? (Coro) 3:59*  
Recitativo  
*1-5 Sei Già Nel Tetto Mio (Elena, Uberto) 4:02*  
N. 2 Coro E Duetto  
*1-6 D'Inibaca Donzella (Coro, Uberto, Elena) 3:14 1-7 Sei Già Sposa? (Uberto, Elena) 2:16*  
*1-8 (Quali Accenti!) (Uberto, Elena) 2:45 1-9 (Ma Son Sorpreso) (Uberto, Elena, Coro) 4:57*  
Scena  
*1-10 Mura Felici (Malcolm) 2:28*  
N. 3 Cavatina  
*1-11 Elena! Oh Tu, Che Chiamo! (Malcolm) 3:21 1-12 Oh Quante Lacrime (Malcolm) 3:01*  
*1-13 Figlia, è Così (Douglas, Malcolm, Elena) 2:10*  
N. 4 Aria  
*1-14 Taci, Lo Voglio (Douglas) 4:00*  
Recitativo  
*1-15 E Nel Fatal Conflitto (Elena, Malcolm) 1:30*  
N. 5 Duettino  
*1-16 Vivere Io Non Potrò (Elena, Malcolm) 3:25*  
N. 6 Coro E Cavatina  
*1-17 Qual Rapido Torrente (Coro) 3:26 1-18 Eccomi A Voi, Miei Prodi (Rodrigo, Coro) 2:12*  
*1-19 A Dov'è Colei (Rodrigo, Coro) 2:31 1-20 Se A' Miei Voti Amor Sorride (Rodrigo, Coro)*  
*2:08*  
Recitativo  
*2-1 Alfin Mi è Dato, O Prence (Douglas, Rodrigo) 1:29*  
N. 7 Coro  
*2-2 Vieni O Stella Che Lucida (Coro) 1:40*  
N. 8 Finale I  
*2-3 Quanto A Quest'alma Amante (Rodrigo, Douglas, Elena) 4:43 2-4 La Mia Spada*  
*(Malcolm, Elena, Douglas) 1:28 2-5 Questo Amplesso (Rodrigo, Malcolm, Douglas, Elena)*  
*1:12 2-6 (Crudel Sospetto) (Rodrigo, Elena, Malcolm, Douglas, Albina, Coro) 2:04 2-7 Sul*  
*Colle A Morve Opposto (Serano, Coro, Douglas, Rodrigo, Elena, Malcolm) 2:09 2-8 Già Un*  
*Raggio Forier (Coro, Albina, Rodrigo, Elena, Malcolm, Serano, Douglas) 2:59 2-9 Su... Amici!*  
*Guerrieri! (Malcolm, Rodrigo, Douglas, Serano, Albina, Elena, Coro) 1:31*

ATTO SECONDO/ACT TWO/ZWEITER AKT/DEUXIÈME ACTE N. 9 Cavatina

2-10 *Oh Fiamma Soave (Uberto)* 8:00

Recitativo

2-11 *Va, Non Temer... (Elena, Serano, Uberto)* 1:43

N. 10 Terzetto

2-12 *Alla Ragion, Deh! Rieda (Elena, Uberto)* 3:51 2-13 *(Nume, Se A' Mieì Sospiri) (Elena, Uberto)* 2:18 2-14 *Vincesti!.. Addio!... (Uberto, Elena)* 2:17 2-15 *Qual Pena In Me Già Desta (Elena, Uberto, Rodrigo)* 1:33 2-16 *Parla... Chi Sei? (Rodrigo, Elena, Uberto, Coro)* 3:23 2-17 *Io Son la Misera (Elena, Uberto, Rodrigo, Coro)* 3:05

Recitativo

2-18 *Uante Sciagure In Un Sol Giorno (Albina, Malcolm, Serano)* 3:51

N. 11 Aria

2-19 *Ah! Si Pera: Ormai la Morte (Malcolm)* 3:59 2-20 *Douglas! Douglas! Ti Salva! (Coro, Albina, Serano, Malcolm)* 1:10 2-21 *Che Sento! (Malcolm, Coro, Albina, Serano)* 1:49

Recitativo

2-22 *Attendi: Il Re Fra Poco (Bertram, Elena)* 1:03

N. 12 Canzoncina Sul Palco

2-23 *Che Sento! ... Aurora! Ah Sorgerai (Elena, Uberto/il Re)* 1:40

Recitativo

2-24 *Stelle! Sembra Egli Stesso! (Elena)* 0:21 2-25 *Eccolo! Amica Sorte (Elena, Il Re)* 1:10

N. 13 Coro

2-26 *Imponga Il Re (Coro)* 1:38

Recitativo

2-27 *Ah! Che Vedo! (Elena, Il Re, Malcolm, Bertram)* 2:42

N. 14 Rondò Finale

2-28 *Tanti Affetti In Tal Momento (Elena, Tutti Gli Altri)* 3:18 2-29 *Fra Il Padre, E Fra L'amante (Elena, Tutii Gli Altri)* 3:25

Elena – Katia Ricciarelli Malcolm – Lucia Valentini-Terrani Uberto (Giacomo V) – Dalmacio González Douglas d'Angus – Samuel Ramey Rodrigo di Dhu – Dano Raffanti Albina – Cecilia Valdenassi Serano – Oslavio Di Credico Bertram – Antonio D'Uva Prague Philharmonic Chorus Chamber Orchestra of Europe Conductor – Maurizio Pollini

La donna del lago, after the poem The Lady of the Lake by Sir Walter Scott, is the 29th in the sequential list of Rossini's operatic titles. Written for the Teatro San Carlo, Naples, it was the first to be based on any of Walter Scott's romantic works. Although the most famous in our time is Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor, Scott's popularity as a source of operatic libretti expanded rapidly after Rossini's example. By 1840, a mere 21 years after La donna del lago, there were at least 25 Italian operas based on Scott plus others by German, French and English composers ('The Bel Canto Operas', Charles Osborne. Methuen, 1994). In my review of Rossini's Armida (Review) of 1817, I outline how Rossini was encouraged to produce a spectacular work for the rebuilt San Carlo's stage facilities and also venture new musical forms. Of the six works Rossini composed between Armida and La donna del lago, three were written for the Naples theatre. It

was here that the composer could let his musical invention find expression without recourse to the more static and traditional operatic conventions that still pertained elsewhere; in no other Naples opera seria does he do that more effectively than in *La donna del lago*. >

Although none of Scott's works had been published in Italian at the time, Rossini had read *The Lady of the Lake* in French translation and been inspired by it. He returned to Naples in the beginning of June 1819 and by early September had completed the composition. Circumstances blighted the premiere of *La donna del lago* on 24 September when the opera had a lukewarm reception that was considerably warmer at subsequent performances. The work remained in the San Carlo repertory for a further twelve years and within five years of its composition it was heard all over Italy as well as in Dresden, Munich, Lisbon, Vienna, Barcelona, St. Petersburg, Paris and London. The Act 2 rondo, *Tanti affetti*, roused Naples audiences when sung by Isobel Colbran, Rossini's mistress and in 1822 his wife. >

The vocal demands of Rossini's opera seria for Naples have always been a challenge. He wrote to suit the artists on the theatre's roster at the time and as obtained by the renowned impresario Domenico Barbaja who had first tempted him to Naples. Alongside the vocally formidable Colbran, the roster included the tenors Giovanni David and Andrea Nozzari, renowned for their ability with stratospheric coloratura singing. Rossini's writing for those three singers has since proved problematic in a period when tenors of the type required seemed to have dried up until the emergence in the 1980s of a new generation from North and South America. >

By 1860 the work was forgotten until its revival in Florence in 1958. It was heard at the Camden Festival, London, in 1969 and at Houston in 1983 in a production that was also seen at Covent Garden. The Rossini Opera Festival at Pesaro presented it in 1981 and 1983. A live recording from the latter Pesaro performances featuring Katia Ricciarelli as Elena, Lucia Valentini Terrani as Malcolm and Samuel Ramey as Douglas was issued by CBS on its Masterworks Label (M2K 39311 nla). An audio recording from the 1992 sequence of La Scala performances conducted by Muti appeared on the Philips label (PH 438 211-2 nla). A DVD version of this Werner Herzog production is available from Opus Arte (Review). >

The story of *La donna del lago* is set in 15th century Scotland at a time of regular border warfare and insurgency. Elena lives near the shores of Loch Katrine with her father, Douglas, who has been exiled by the King. Although her father has promised her to the rebel chief Rodrigo di Dhu, she loves the young highlander Malcolm, a 'trousers' role. After rowing over the Loch Elena meets and offers shelter to Uberto who had become separated from his hunting party. Uberto is in fact the King against whom Douglas and Rodrigo are in conflict. The incognito Uberto falls in love with Elena and later gives her a ring promising that if ever in

difficulty or danger it will secure the help of the King. After the defeat of the rebels and the death of Rodrigo Elena seeks out Uberto and discovers his true identity. The King keeps his promise, pardons Douglas and gives Malcolm Elena's hand in marriage. The opera concludes with much rejoicing. >

La donna del lago opens without an overture, the only one of the composer's operatic works to do so. Instead, Rossini seeks to conjure up the atmosphere of the Scottish Highlands in sixteen bars of orchestral introduction. A light-hearted chorus follows this as Elena appears in her boat on the Loch and sings the lovely motif *O mattutini albori* (CD 1 tr.3). This is followed by Elena's meeting with Uberto (trs. 4-5) and the first part of an extended duet interspersed by contributions from the chorus and Serano and Albina as Elena takes the pensive Uberto to shelter in her home (trs. 3-12). This scene is contained on CD 1 and by the end I had forgotten the duties of reviewer as I gloried in the singing of Carmen Giannattasio as Elena and Kenneth Tarver as Uberto. Both voices are new to me. The Neapolitan Giannattasio has an evenly produced soprano with a lowish centre so that the vocal outcome is a creamy tone allied to the capacity for subtle characterisation. Add to this good diction and flexible coloratura technique and the role of Elena seems ideally suited to her. The American Kenneth Tarver matches Giannattasio for even vocal emission to which he adds comparable beauty of tone. The thirty-nine minutes of the first CD flew by, uninterrupted by intrusive applause. I had to remind myself of my critical duties and, without any thought of hardship I started again at the beginning. I approached CD 2 with some trepidation, wondering if the singing of Patricia Bardon as Malcolm, Elena's lover, and Gregory Kunde in particular in the Nozzari role of Rodrigo di Dhu, would be of similar standard. I need not have worried. Patricia Bardon's singing of Malcolm's recitative and aria *Mura felicei...Elena! Oh tu* is firm toned, even and expressive in her distinctive low mezzo (CD 2 trs. 1-3). The arrival of Rodrigo to whom Douglas has promised Elena (CD 2 tr. 10) ups the emotional temperature. Rodrigo is nothing if not wholly confident of his prowess as a fighter and his future as Elena's husband, Gregory Kunde meets all the florid and dramatic requirements of the role. He may not have the sheer beauty of tone of his tenor counterpart Kenneth Tarver, but his attack is unflinching with his characterisation matching it and without any strained, curdled or sour notes as found on other CD or DVD versions. >

Rossini's finest and most tuneful music comes in the second act, (CD 3) starting with the long duet between the disguised king and Elena (CD 3 trs. 1-5). Tarver sings particularly well as Elena dismisses Serano and as Uberto reminds her of her earlier hospitality to him (trs 1-2). The arrival of Rodrigo allows for some vocally thrilling competition between the tenors before he and Uberto go off to fight (trs 5-6). After Rodrigo is killed Douglas, sung by Robert Gleadow with a firm if lean bass, turns himself in to the king. After Elena shows the ring Uberto gave her, and she realises his true identity, all ends happily with the famous rondo *Tanti affetti* (Tr16). I need hardly say that Carmen Giannattasio's singing of this well-known piece is of the highest standard. The smaller roles are all well cast with Colin Lee, carded for one of the prima tenor roles at Garsington later in the season, in good voice as Serano and Francesca Sassu an appealing Albina. >

Maurizio Benini's conducting contributes significantly to the all-round success of this live recording. So too does the vibrant chorus although they are rather savagely caught by the microphones in some scenes when it is necessary to sit near the volume control. As with the recent recording of Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien* (Review) my enjoyment benefited from the absence of intrusive applause although it does leave the acoustic rather dead at the end of the performance. >

The presentation is in the usual Opera Rara luxury box complete with a performance history and casts, a libretto with full English translation and a synopsis in French, German and Italian. Jeremy Commons' extensive essay is a little more diffuse than usual and did leave me a little confused as to the absolute origin of the edition performed. He refers to the performance being in the critical edition prepared by Colin Slim. If his Colin Slim is the H Colin Slim responsible for the critical edition performed at Pesaro in 1983, and recorded by CBS, then I should highlight the disparity in timings between the 138 minutes of that performance and the 169 here. This is accounted for by the addition of some extra material such as Douglas presenting himself to the king (CD3 tr.10), and elsewhere and also by conductor Pollini's speeds. He famously eschewed any ornaments except in the concluding rondo *Tanti affetti*, which he permitted only after being presented with three versions in Rossini's hand! (Philip Gossett. 'Divas and Scholars', Chicago, 2006). Other matters of detail include the incorrect labelling of Giovanni David's lithograph picture on page 10. He created the role of the king not Douglas. The banda score was edited and prepared by Andrew Moore. ---Robert J Farr, musicweb-international.com

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