



Cecilian harmonies

Few will disagree that it is those artists who are passionate interpreters of lost music who are entitled to a halo. Recent albums have restored such a lost cause as Antonio Salieri to the fold (not that any real musicologist has ever had any serious doubts about either his status or importance), now it is the turn of a file of composers who are not forgotten, but either traduced or in some way misinterpreted, both by tradition and neglect. The haloed artist in question is [of course] **Cecilia Bartoli**: the excuse in this case has been her not-less-idiosyncratic star mezzosoprano predecessor and activist, the legendary

Maria Malibran

CD/DVD *MARIA* Decca 475 9082 (2007)

The list of items on these discs is only mildly innovatory, even if no melomaniac will quite have expected to see Mendelssohn and Hummel included shoulder-to-shoulder with a clutch of Italian maestri; the emphasis is upon interpretation. Surprisingly, for a celebration of a Bel Canto icon by a Bel Canto icon, there is nothing here by Rossini or Donizetti. Possibly this is historic justice as both these composers were thoroughly mauled by the great Maria (as is witnessed by the latter's unsolicited *extra* composed for *L'elisir d'amore!*) But the impact of intensely personal interpretive gifts upon the art of singing is unmistakable. We are reminded, if we need to be so reminded, that no music succeeded without great advocacy, then or now.

Not all of it is lost music, we have heard the *Ines De Castro* of Persiani at Jesi, and it has been revived in Portugal; *Amelia* of Lauro Rossi has featured on earlier discs; but certainly the lesser operas of Halévy have had a non-showing, now - thanks to Cecilia - you can hear his *Clari* (a war-horse of Maria) in full (see next page) if you can get a seat! This disc includes a brief extract only. Bellini does very well indeed on the grounds of emotional nous; as does Pacini with a fabulous extract from his *Irene o L'assedio di Messina* in which Maria exulted. The

Mendelssohn is a revelation (*we* remember that *he* defended *La Fille du régiment* against Biedermeier critics).

Most of these fabulously sung items are included in a forthcoming Bartoli "Maria" tour. Dates are as follows [getting seats is something else]

October 17
Switzerland,
Martigny
October 19
Lucerne
November 2
Madrid, Teatro
Real
November 4
Barcelona, Palau
November 17
Berlin
November 19
Hamburg



November 24
Amsterdam,
Concertgebouw
December 2
Munich
December 12
Brussels, Palais des
Beaux Arts
December 14/16
Paris, Th. des
Champs -Elysées
December 19/21
London. Barbican

There is a beatific whole-day Marathon on 24 March 2008 at the Salle Pleyel in Paris:

11.00 Le salon romantique de Maria Malibran
Cecilia Bartoli mezzosoprano
Maxim Vengerov violin
Lang Lang piano
Liszt/Bériot/Czerny/Malibran/Moscheles/Rossini/Viardot

15.00 *La cenerentola* (concert vsn)
w. Bartoli in the title role/Siragusa/Widmer/
Chausson/Polgar
Orchestra and Chorus of the Zürich Opera
cond. Adam Fischer

20.30 Recital with orchestra and guests
Bartoli/Vengerov/Lang etc
Mozart/Mendelssohn/Rossini/Bellini/Donizetti

Cecilia Bartoli will be singing the title role in the first modern performances of *Clari* (1828) by Jacques-Fromental Halévy (libretto: Pietro Giannone) based on the play 'Clari or the Maid of Milan' by John Howard Payne, at the Opernhaus, Zürich on 23/25/27/29/31 May 2008 w. Cecilia Bartoli (Clari), Eva Liebau (Bettina), Stefania Kaluzza (Simonetta), Javier Camarena (Duca), Carlos Chausson (Germano), Cheyne Davidson (Alberto), Giuseppe Scorsin (Luca). Cond. Adam Fischer

As a small bonus I can add that Cecilia Bartoli and Juan Diego Flórez together recorded a complete *Sonnambula* in August this year!