Giovanni Pacini – L'ultimo giorno di Pompei

Disc: 1 *1. Act I: Viva Sallustio - Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava/Giuliano Carella 2. Act I: Voi Mi Rendete, O Dei - Nicolas Rivenq 3. Act I: Del Civico Serto - Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava/Giuliano Carella 4. Act I: Teco A Goder La Gioia - Raul Gimenez 5. Act I: S'Innalzino All'Etra - Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava/Sonia Lee/Raul Gimenez/Gregory Bonfatti/Nicolas Rivenq 6. Act I: Vieni Sallustio - Raul Gimenez 7. Act I: Di Porporine Rose - Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava/Giuliano Carella 8. Act I: Alfin Goder Mi E Dato - Iano Tamar 9. Act I: Basti Ad Esprimerti - Iano Tamar 10. Act I: Piu Ad Appagar Del Popolo - Raul Gimenez 11. Act I: Da Te L'Estrema Volta - Raul Gimenez 12. Act I: Col Cor Palpitante - Raul Gimenez 13. Act I: Sopprimerlo? Ah1 No...Mai... - Raul Gimenez 14. Act I: Fausto! Fausto! - Raul Gimenez 15. Act I: Pubblio, Gia M'Intendesti - Raul Gimenez 16. Act I: Plauso, Onor, Sincero Omaggio - Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava/Giuliano Carella 17. Act I: Ah! Questo De' Miei Giorni - Nicolas Rivenq 18. Act I: Illustre Cittadin - Riccardo Novaro 19. Act I: Festeggiamo L'Istante Augurato - Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava/Giuliano Carella 20. Act I: Alla Tribuna Scendi - Gregory Bonfatti 21. Act I: Ecco La Man D'Astrea - Raul Gimenez 22. Act I: Lo Spettacolo Eletto - Riccardo Novaro 23. Act I: Se I Numi Fausti Sperar Mi Lice - Riccardo Novaro 24. Act I: Appio, Non Dubitar - Gregory Bonfatti 25. Act I: Io La Vedro Tra Palpiti - Raul Gimenez 26. Act I: Piu Brillante Di Questo Che Cade - Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava/Giuliano Carella 27. Act I: Nel Vederti, O Sposo Amato - Iano Tamar 28. Act I: Vedi Come Ognun S'Affretta - Iano Tamar* Disc: 2 *1. Act I: Qual Denso Velo - Nicolas Rivenq 2. Act I: No, Sallustio, La Sposa Innocente - Iano Tamar 3. Act II: Pubblio! - Raul Gimenez 4. Act II: Sei Nell'Augusto Tempio - Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava/Giuliano Carella 5. Act II: Forza, O Debol Cor! - Nicolas Rivenq 6. Act II: Squarciami Il Core, O Barbaro - Iano Tamar 7. Act II: Dunque Innocente... - Nicolas Rivenq 8. Act II: Sallustio, Il Popol Freme - Raul Gimenez 9. Act II: Dei! Qual Fragore Insolito! - Nicolas Rivenq 10. Act II: E Qui Come Promise - Emil Alekperov 11. Act II: Che Piu Brami O Mio Cor! - Raul Gimenez 12. Act II: O Mio Crudele Affetto - Raul Gimenez 13. Act II: Cela Le Acerbe Smanie - Raul Gimenez 14. Act II: Oh Sventurata Ottavia - Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava/Giuliano Carella 15. Act II: Su Questa Man Concedi - Iano Tamar 16. Act II: Voi Che Sapete - Iano Tamar 17. Act II: Del Figlio Mio Dolente - Iano Tamar 18. Act II: Che ! Irato Ancora E Il Ciel - Nicolas Rivenq 19. Act II: Quale Scoppio! - Iano Tamar/Raul Gimenez/Gregory Bonfatti/Nicolas Rivenq/Coro Da Camera Di Bratislava*

Appio Diomede, tribuno - Raul Gimenez Ottavia, moglie di Sallustio - Iano Tamar Sallustio, magistrato - Nicolas Rivenq Pubblio, custode delle pubbliche Terme - Gregory Bonfatti Menenio, figlio di Ottavia e Sallustio - Sonia Lee Il Gran sacerdote del tempio di Giove - Riccardo Novaro Clodio, giovanetto, figlio di Pubblio - Svetlana Sidorova Fausto, liberto di

Sallustio - Emil Alekperov Coro da Camera di Bratislava Orchestra del Teatro Bellini di Catania Giuliano Carella – conductor Recorded 2/4.VIII, 1996 Palazzo Ducale, Martina Franca, Italy

The 19th century Italian composer Giovanni Pacini, who for about thirty years (1820-1850), was considered on a par with Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, and even early Verdi, is sadly little known today. Yet, some recent revivals of his operas (at Wexford, at Martina Franca, by Opera Rara, by Marco Polo) indicate that his relative obscurity is by no means deserved. His acknowledged masterpiece, SAFFO, was actually performed a bit more frequently than his other works, enjoying notable revivals in 1911 (by the great Eugenia Burzio), again in 1939, in 1967 by Leyla Gencer (in Naples), and more recently at the Wexford Festival (with a fine Marco Polo recording), and with performances by Montserrat Caballe (Barcelona, Vienna) and Adelaide Negri.

SAFFO was written in Pacini's "second" period (ca.1840) and clearly points ahead to the developed characterizations, simplification of the vocal lines, etc. that we see in mature Verdi. But Pacini wrote numerous operas (prior to 1835) that are archetypally "bel canto," two of which have seen excellent recordings of late: Opera Rara's CARLO DI BORGOGNA (which failed abjectly when premiered, but, with the Opera Rara recording at hand, certainly didn't deserve that fate!). But perhaps more interesting is L'ULTIMO GIORNO DI POMPEI, which was produced with great success in August 1996 as part of the Festival della Valle d'Itria di Martina Franca. In just about every way this production, a performance of which is now available (in excellent sound, with good notes and bi-lingual libretto) on the adventurous Dynamic label, is excellent--a model of a commercial "live" recording.

First, there is the opera itself. It was Pacini's most popular (and very likely best) work of his "first" period. At times it sounds like very fine Rossini, at other moments it rivals some of the best Donizetti.... But Pacini is not a simple imitator. At times he demonstrates a distinctive--and very beautiful---voice of his own; he was, after all, called "the maestro of the cabaletta." Just consider what happens in Act II, for instance, the scena and aria for Appio, "O mio crudele affetto," or the funereal march (a la Spontini??) "Oh sventurata Ottavia" that precedes Ottavia's "gran scena." Her memorable aria "Su questa man concedi" is comparable to some of the finest pages of late Donizetti. What is interesting, however, is that Pacini, in a way looking forward into the future, moves this "finale" along with fascinating touches, integrating the famous eruption of Mt. Vesuvius as a real player into the action. The ending is like nothing else from that time period (1825), and one can fully understand why the work kept audiences enraptured! In Act I there is a gorgeous extended duet, where Pacini precedes Bellini in employing the graceful legato line. Of course, there are definite numbers that DO sound like Rossini or Donizetti, but

then, there is also something much more here.

And the cast? Well, it is definitely world-class: Raul Gimenez, the Appio here, is superb. He has the right creamy lyrical voice, with some fine head tones, and can rise to the high challenges that the score demands. No squeally voice here! Not another tight voiced "tenorino"....No, Gimenez is the real thing, and his assumption of the role of Appio proves it amply. Iano Tamar, who has recorded a SEMIRAMIDE I think, is equally fine, capable of both the vocal fireworks demanded at times, but also of the deepening dramatic aspects of the score, especially in her "gran scena" at the end of Act II. The rest of the cast...Nicolas Rivenq (Sallustio), Gregory Bonfatti (Pubblio), and Sonia Lee (Menenio) are uniformly good to very good.

Giuliano Carella leads the well-schooled orchestra of the Teatro Massimo Bellini di Catania.

In sum, if you love Italian opera, if you love Donizetti, Rossini, Bellini, and early Verdi, then you really need to sample this work. Like me, I think you'll be going back for a second, a third, and more auditions....L'ULTIMO GIORNO DI POMPEI is certainly worth it. ---B. Cathey, amazon.com

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