Otto Nicolai - Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor (The Merry Wives of Windsor) [1956]



Disc 1 *1. Overture 2. Act I: Nein, das ist wirklich doch zu keck! - Geschwind zu meiner Nachbarin - Was werden wir beginnen? 3. Act I: Dialogue 4. Act I: So geht indes hinein - Wenn eure Seele je empfunden - Bin ich erhort? 5. Act I: Recitative and Aria: Nun eilt herbei, Witz, heitre Laune 6. Act I: Dialogue 7. Act I: So hab' ich dich errungen - Frau Fluth! - Herein! herein! 8. Act I: Ha, ha, ha, ha! Geht nur - Ach, einst in jenen Tagen - Abscheulicher! Ich hab es satt! 9. Act II: Dialogue 10. Act II: Als Bublein klein 11. Act II: Dialogue 12. Act II: Gott gruss' euch, Sir! - Ja, Sir Bach, nun denkt euch nur! - Wie freu' ich mich* Disc 2 *1. Act II: Dies ist die Stunde, wo sie oft 2. Act II: Horch, die Lerche singt im Hain! 3. Act II: Fenton! - Mein Mädchen! 4. Act II: Bestürmen denn die läst'gen Freier 5. Act II: Dialog 6. Act II: So! Jetzt hätt' ich ihn gefangen! 7. Act III: Dialog 8. Act III: Wohl denn! Gefasst ist der Entschluss! 9. Act III: Dialog 10. Act III: O süßer Mond! O holde Nacht! 11. Act III: Die Glocke schlug schon Mitternacht 12. Act III: Ihr Elfen, weiß und rot und grau 13. Act III: Er gesteht noch immer nicht 14. Act III: Dialog 15. Act III: So hat denn der Schwank*
Sir John Falstaff - Arnold van Mill Herr Fluth - Walter Berry Herr Reich - Siegmund Rath Fenton - Karl Terkal Spärlich - Kurt Marschner Dr. Cajus - Adolf Meyer-Bremen Frau Fluth - Wilma Lipp Frecca Renate Bortfeld) Frau Reich - Hilde Roessl-Majdan Marlene Riphahn) Jungfer Anna Reich - Rosl Schweiger Chor des Norddeutschen Rundfunks Sinfonieorchester des Norddeutschen Rundfunks (NDR) Conductor - Wilhelm Schüchter

Written in 1841, Nicolai's delightful interpretation of Shakespeare's comedy The Merry Wives of Windsor was an important contribution to early German romantic opera. Merry wives Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page teach the lecherous knight, Sir John Falstaff, a much-deserved lesson after they each receive identical letters from him proposing illicit affairs. While the ladies scramble to trap Falstaff and prove their fidelity to their jealous husbands, the Page's daughter Anne tries to thwart her parents' plans to marry her off to rich, ridiculous suitors, rather than her beloved, Fenton. Finally, the entire community comes together to scare Falstaff straight during a midnight rendezvous in Windsor Woods. Sparkling orchestration, soaring arias, delightful characters, and hilarious situations abound in this charming opera. --- bostonconservatory.berklee.edu

Otto Nicolai (1810 - 1848) became one of the few "one-hit wonders" among classical composers. Although some of his operas had success during his lifetime, it is really only his final opera, The Merry Wives of Windsor, that has become a repertory item, and then for the most part only in German-speaking countries. This tuneful and lighthearted overture is probably the only Nicolai music that most people have heard. Nicolai was born in Königsberg, a German city so far east that it is now part of Russia. He revered Mozart and sought to emulate his elegance, clarity of form, and novelty of orchestration. After studies in Berlin, he went on to Italy, where he learned much about vocal music, the great polyphonic pieces of the Renaissance, and the new bel canto operatic style of Bellini and Donizetti. After achieving initial success in Italy, Nicolai made his career in Vienna, where in 1842 he became the founding conductor of what was then called the Philharmonic Concert Orchestra. His earlier opera Il templario had gained him success in several countries. Seeking a subject for his first opera originally in German, he resisted the idea of attempting a Shakespeare setting, but eventually did begin this opera based on the play of the same name. His aim, he wrote, was to continue the German operatic tradition, "...but Italian lightness must be added." He is far from the only composer to write an opera on the subject of the fat knight, Sir John Falstaff, and the comeuppance he gets from a pair of bourgeois wives when he tries to seduce them. The most famous of at least ten operas on the subject is Verdi's Falstaff, with Vaughan Williams' Sir John in Love probably coming in third place after the Nicolai work. Nicolai was crushed when the Court Opera of Vienna rejected it. He took the job of conductor of the Berlin Royal Opera in 1847, along with receiving an invitation to play the opera there. It was a rousing success from its first performance, March 9, 1849. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage on May 11, 1849. The overture is about eight minutes long. Almost a third of it is a slow, melodic introduction, which perhaps suggests the broad landscape the Thames-side town of Windsor. One of the two main melodies of the overture becomes associated later in the opera with Mrs. Page, and a heavy-footed subsidiary theme surely standing for Falstaff. The music is unfailingly bright and bubbling, without doubt the best comic opera overture by a Germanic composer since Mozart. ---Joseph Stevenson, allmusic.com

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