Pietro Mascagni – L'Amico Fritz (Gavazzeni) [2000]



CD1 *1 Preludietto 3:33 2 Act 1. Ma questa e una pazzia! 4:57 3 Act 1. Son pochi fiori 3:31 4 Act 1. Orsu, vieni tra noi, al fianco mio 1:46 5 Act 1. Chi mai sara? 4:01 6 Act 1. Laceri, miseri, tanti bambini 2:50 7 Act 1. Viva lo zingaro! 1:36 8 Act 1. Per voi, ghiottoni inutili 1:08 9 Act 1. Il suo sermone e splendido! 0:38 10 Act 1. Son gli orfanelli 2:13 11 Act 2. Ah! le belle ciliege! 6:07 12 Act 2. Bel cavalier, che vai per la foresta 2:08 13 Act 2. Suzel, buon di! 4:11 14 Act 2. Tutto tace 4:25 15 Act 2. Oh! chi e che giunge? 2:19 16 Act 2. Vediamo un po'! 2:59 17 Act 2. Faceasi vecchio Abramo 6:11 18 Act 2. Come va? 2:11 19 Act 2. Quale strano turbamento 1:19 20 Act 2. Fritz, noi partiamo. Addio! 0:43 21 Act 2. Che piu s'aspetta? 3:31* CD2 *1 Intermezzo 3:59 2 Act 3. Tutto ho tentato 3:11 3 Act 3. Buon giorno, Fritz! 1:25 4 Act 3. O pallida, che un giorno mi guardasti 2:50 5 Act 3. O amore, o bella luce del core 2:29 6 Act 3. L'amico Fritz fantastica d'amore! 1:42 7 Act 3. Povero Fritz, l'amore in te si desta 1:20 8 Act 3. Non mi resta che il pianto ed il dolore 2:45 9 Act 3. Come s'e fatta pallida! 1:37 10 Act 3. Ah! ditela per me quella parola 6:11 11 Act 3. Amici, ho vinto, ho vinto! 0:47 12 Act 3. Tu sposi, Fritz? 2:06*
Suzel..... Mirella Freni Fritz Kobus..... Luciano Pavarotti
Beppe..... Laura Didier Gambardella David..... Vincenzo Sardinero
Hanezň..... Benito di Bella Federico..... Luigi Pontiggia
Caterina..... Malvina Major Coro e Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden - Gianandrea Gavazzeni

The score is consistently charming, elegiac, unassuming and well made. Any enterprising opera lover should own this pleasing work, when it is so charmingly performed.

This was one of the first sets I reviewed for GRAMOPHONE. Listening to it again, I found my pleasure in the work and admiration for its performance even further enhanced, so that Shaw's dictum that it is an opera which will "pass the evening pleasantly enough for you but which you need not regret missing if you happen to have business elsewhere" seems all that more unkind. When given as lovingly as it is here it has its own validity; the score consistently charming,

elegiac, unassuming and well made, as I commented back in 1969, and these are qualities to be cherished in an age that has tended to overlook or ignore them in its own contributions to the genre.

What makes the reading so recommendable now is that one is very unlikely to hear the work today in the theatre and even less likely to hear it sung with such affection. At the point in their careers when Freni sang Suzel and Pavarotti Fritz, they were ideally suited to these roles. From her opening solo, through her ballad, the inspired Cherry Duet to her Third Act solo of sorrow, Freni sings with such warmth of tone and expression as to melt any heart doubting the worth of the music. She sounds at once vulnerable and wistful throughout. Pavarotti strikes just the right note of eager ardour as he gradually falls in Love with Suzel after averring that he is impervious to the emotion. He shades his part with elegiac accent and winning pianissimos. These Modenese neighbours obviously enjoyed singing together, and their contributions, not least their Third Act duet where they fall into each other's arms, alone make the recording worthwhile. But there are also Vincenzo Sardinero's firm, vibrant tones to turn the role of the matchmaking rabbi David into something positive and Gavazzeni's affectionate way with the orchestra to indicate Mascagni's care over instrumentation.

I am less happy, as before, with the blustery Beppe, a too fulsome mezzo for a travesti part. But as a whole the pastoral-passionate mood of the piece is wonderfully caught—and recorded: I wish producers today could imitate this kind of natural, forward sound. Only the range of the orchestra shows the age of the recording—but that may have something to do with the dry tone of the Covent Garden strings. Any enterprising opera lover should own this pleasing work, when it is so charmingly done. -- Gramophone [8/1987]

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