

Andrea MASTRONI

BASS



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MELANCHOLIA

Händel's Bass Arias

Accademia dell'Annunziata
Riccardo Doni

Melancholia

Andrea Mastroni presents *Melancholia*, a journey through Handel's great arias for bass

In December the Italian singer will release a record that will be officially launched in Milan next February

In early December *Melancholia* (Egea Music) will be released on the international market, a recording of arias by the most important composer from the Italian baroque opera period, Georg Friedrich Händel - a German who carved a career for himself in England. The renowned Italian bass Andrea Mastroni has just recorded the album alongside the Orchestra Accademia dell'Annunciata, conducted by Riccardo Doni. This new recording focusses on little-known compositions made for the low bass register from operas such as *Ezio* and *Orlando*, written especially for the singer Antonio Montagnana. Montagnana was an extraordinary artist who, thanks to his talent and range, inspired the composer to write music for roles especially created for bass, a register that was side-lined in musical theatre during this period, when the prima donna or castrato took pride of place. "When searching for material for this recording," explains Andrea Mastroni, "I discovered an artistic personality who was literally devoted to the stage, at a time when the dramaturgical climate was highly expressive." The Italian singer wanted to take on some of the roles that this extraordinary artist had inspired, allowing the

genius Handel to create roles with strong dramatic impact.

The repertoire in *Melancholia* also includes arias written for other outstanding singers of the period, such as Gustavus Waltz and Giuseppe Mari Boschi, who appeared in the operas *Ariodante*, *Riccardo Primo Re d'Inghilterra* and *Acis and Galatea*. The recording is a tour de force, bringing almost forgotten repertoire to life again. The official launch will be in Milan on the 4th February 2018.



Biography

With his very own deep bass sound, dark-toned and velvety, but with a wide tessitura and great agility. An expert in Rossini and Mozart and in baroque composers such as Händel and Vivaldi, his dedication to Lied has also helped him consolidate his renowned ability to colour and build unique phrasing which is supple, expressive and very dramatic, with special attention given to nuances.

Operatic acclaimed Bass Andrea Mastroni began his musical education as a clarinetist before moving to vocal studies, where he trained with Lella Cubelli, Rita Antoniazzi and Fernando Cordeiro Opa, his actual vocal coach, and graduated from the Istituto Claudio Monteverdi in Cremona.

His awards include the Mario Basiola Prize (2005), the Giuseppe Di Stefano prize (Trapani) for his portrayal of Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, the Bibiena (Mantua) prize (2007), the first prize on Città di Brescia and the XXXVII Prize Franco Abbiati for his performance in Perocco's *Aquagranda* at Teatro La Fenice.

His operatic performances include *Rigoletto* and *Aida* (Arena di Verona, Opernhaus Zurich, Teatro Massimo di Palermo and Metropolitan Opera), *Verdi Requiem* (Carlo Felice di Genova), *Rigoletto* (Teatro alla Scala, Tokyo, Teatro Real de Madrid and Opéra de Montecarlo), *La Traviata* (Teatro alla Scala), *La Fanciulla del West* (Opéra de Paris), *L'Orfeo* (Bayerische Staatsoper), *Macbeth* (Theatre des Champs Elysées), *Turandot* (Cincinnati Opera and Festival de Peralada), *Die Zauberflöte* (Teatro Massimo di Palermo, Teatro Carlo Felice, Hamburgische Staatsoper), *La Bohème* and *Siegfried* (Teatro Campoamor Oviedo and Teatro La Fenice in Venice), the world premiere of *Aquagranda* by F. Perocco (Teatro La Fenice in Venice), *Don Carlo* (Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Opera House in Amsterdam). Other operatic roles included Figaro/Bartolo from *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Palau de Les Arts de Valencia), Frère Laurent (*Romeo et Juliette*, Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa), Oroveso (*Norma*, Politeama in Lecce), Stravinskij's *Pulcinella*, Raimondo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Ferrando (*Il trovatore*), title role of *Don Pasquale*, Don Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) and Mustafà (*L'italiana in Algeri*).

He has collaborated in productions of contemporary opera, including the world premiere of



Lavagnino's *Messa Chigiana* in Genoa, Hazon's *Requiem* in Sanremo, Arnaboldi's *Dante Racconta l'Inferno* and Bellisario's *La Signora di Monza*.

In concert he has performed the Bach's *Johannespassion* at the Ravenna Festival and at the MiTo Festival (Milan and Turin), Mozart's *Requiem* in Padua with I Solisti Veneti, Dvorak's *Stabat Mater* at Roma and Assisi with Slovakian Radio Choir and Orchestra, a recital at the Festival International – Art Lyrique in Aix-en-Provence and Mozart's *Requiem* at the Festival Anima Mundi in Pisa with Sir Christopher Hogwood.

Mr. Mastroni's discography includes Gounod *Romeo et Juliette* with Fabio Luisi and Orchestra del Teatro Carlo Felice (Decca), *Semiramide* with Antonino Fogliani and *Virtuosi Brunensis* (Naxos), *Lamento* - songs for voice and piano by Henri Duparc with Mattia Ometto (Brilliant Classics), *I Vespri Siciliani* with Teatro Regio di Parma (C Major), *Rigoletto* on DVD from Opernhaus Zurich (Pjilarmonia Records), Marchetti's *Romeo e Giulietta* (Dynamic) and *Rigoletto* (Delos Music) with D. Hvorostovsky.

Engagements of season and beyond include *Rodelinda* at the Opera de Lille, Rocco in *Fidelio* at Opera de Oviedo, *Rigoletto* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Bayerische Staatsoper and Teatro di San Carlo, *Tosca* at the Osterfestspiele Salzburg, Beethoven's *Symphony n.9*, *Simon Boccanegra* at Lausanne, *Turandot*, *La Calisto* and *Die Zauberflöte* at Teatro Real Madrid.

ABOUT MELANCHOLIA

Melancholy were the sounds on a winter's night (V. Woolf, Jacob's Room)

“... Farfalla confusa fra l'ombra e gl'orrori”

The freshness of Händel's opera pages has made me ponder at length about the identity of this vocality, which is defined as the “basso profondo”.

Being a scholar of a specific mechanical, expressive and artistic research, means above all addressing a more instrumental thanvocal investigation, indeed searching and investigating the identity of a ‘counter-bass’. J. B. Steane, on the subject of this vocality, asserts that it “derives from a method of tone-production that eliminates the Italian quick vibrato. In its place is a kind of tonal solidity, a wall-like front, which may nevertheless prove susceptible to the other kind of vibrato, the slow beat or dreaded wobble”. (John B. Steane, *Voices, Singers & Critics*, Amadeus editore (1992)).

When I chose to record this monographic work on Händel's bass arias, I was very intrigued by the re-discovery of the vocal character of the famous bass, Antonio Montagnana (1730? - 1750), for whose unprecedented vocal profile Händel wrote the most interesting and complex pages.

I found myself in front of an artistic personality at the service of an ante litteram well-rounded ‘parola scenica’ (scenic word) and a strongly expressive dramaturgy. A most appealing approach was to imagine how coloratura, extension and evident dramatic accent helped shed some light on a vocal authority truly exceptional for its time, especially with respect to the repertoire of the bass voice. In those pages I wanted to put myself in his shoes, which have the greatness of an artist who with his uncommon ability offered Händel's genius the opportunity to give shape and body to characters of rare theatrical impact.

This means performing and living a dramatic and expressive coloratura to convey, for example, Varo's impetus in “Già risonard'intorno”, from Ezio (1731), a masterful vocal interplay for bass and concerto trumpet, which opens the *Melancholia* tracklist, without leaving out Zoroastro's authentic ‘spells’ of pyrotechnic coloratura in Orlando (1733).

The fact that the bass key had been taken away from an ordinary supporting role was deliberately quite

clear in Montagnana's times.

Along with the research on Montagnana's profile, I did not want to neglect other Händelian treasures entrusted to other basses who were popular at the time, in some cases with more modest, but equally expressive vocality, including Gustavus Waltz (1732-1759), for whom the touching and sensitive character of the King of Scotland in the *Ariodante* (1734) was composed, and Giuseppe Maria Boschi (1675-1744), himself a Venetian like Montagnana. The latter performed, among other things, the evocative ‘Aci, Galatea e Polifemo” (1708) during Händel's stay in Naples: in it Händel loved to play with all the voice ranges and dramatic accents to emphasize the bipolarity of the mythological giant, in his being both a tempter and an ambiguous seducer. The result was innovative well beyond the expressive canons of the time.

In the making of *Melancholia* I very much relished the idea of surrounding myself with young talents: the members of the orchestra of the Accademia dell'Annunciata, with their wonderful youthful enthusiasm, robust technical preparation and remarkable flair, led by their conductor and special harpsichordist, Riccardo Doni. A special synergy ensued which allowed me to achieve a highly expressive style and to live roles that had enraptured the audiences of the greatest theatres for half the 18th century.

It is notable to think that the treasures of this past musical world will live on thanks to *Melancholia*, because music is intrinsically able to tell distant epochs and to exercise the historical memory, a higher form of civilization and culture, vital and essential for the consciousness of future generations.

Andrea Mastroni

- 1 - GIÀ RISONARD'INTORNO (Ezio HWV 29)
- 2 - INVIDIA SORTE AVARA (Ariodante HWV 33)
- 3 - VOLI COLLA SUA TROMBA (Ariodante HWV 33)
- 4 - OUVERTURE (Riccardo I Re d'Inghilterra HWV 23)
- 5 - NEL MONDO E NELL'ABISSO (Riccardo I HWV 23)
- 6 - FRA L'OMBRE E GL'ORRORI (Aci, Galatea e Polifemo HWV 72)
CONCERTO GROSSO Op. 6 n. 1 per archi e b.c.
 - 7 - A tempo giusto
 - 8 - Allegro
 - 9 - Adagio
 - 10 - Allegro
 - 11 - Allegro
- 12 - LASCIA AMOR E SIEGUI MARTE (Orlando HWV 31)
- 13 - OUVERTURE (Orlando HWV 31)
- 14 - O VOI DEL MIO POTER MINISTRI ELETTI... (Orlando HWV 31)
- 15 - SORGE INFAUSTA UNA PROCELLA (Orlando HWV 31)
- 16 - OUVERTURE (Ezio HWV 29)
- 17 - NASCE AL BOSCO IN ROZZA CUNA (Ezio HWV 29)

ANDREA MASTRONI, bass

ACCADEMIA DELL'ANNUNCIATA, with original instruments
RICCARDO DONI, cembalo and conductor



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