

CREATOR RECORDS – VOLUME II

LICINIO REFICE (1883 or 1885 Patricia, near Rome-1954 Rio de Janeiro) was an Italian priest and professor of church music at the Academy of Music, Rome. Not unnaturally the greater part of his musical output is what might be called functional or occupational: masses, oratorios, motets and other sacred music. His *Cecilia*, however, which was first performed at the Rome Opera in 1934 on the occasion of the 350th anniversary of the foundation of the Academy dedicated to St. Cecilia, and is called a "Sacred Action in Three Episodes", is far more of an opera than its description might suggest.

It is, in fact, in the direct line of Italian oratorio which, unlike that of England and Germany, took the form of opera on a sacred subject and was intended for performance on the stage in Lent. Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto* is a famous example of oratorio or "azione sacra", and Refice's use of the term for his *Cecilia* prepares the listener for visions, an angelic voice, apotheoses and other supernatural scenes. Refice's idiom is that of modern Italian opera with a strong flavour of the composer's professional background.

The three episodes of *Cecilia* are: the marriage of Cecilia and Valerian, the conversion of Valerian and the martyrdom of the Saint. The main action is preceded by a prologue entitled "L'annunzio" in which the voice of the Angel of God (indicated in the score to be sung by a "small choir of sopranos", but usually, as in this recording, left to a solo singer) is heard in a scene glorifying St. Cecilia.

Considerable effect is achieved in the stage action by the reproduction as living tableaux of famous pictures of St. Cecilia, and the prologue, "L'annunzio", takes place with the curtains half opened to show the figure of the Saint as she appears in the mosaic in the Basilica of St. Cecilia Trastevere in Rome.

The final martyrdom of Cecilia occurs in the second of the two scenes which comprise the third episode of Refice's "Sacred Action". The Saint is thrown into an underground furnace and after being struck with a sword is left to die. Cecilia's followers attempt to raise her to her feet and take her away, but she refuses with the words: "Grazie sorelle!" (Thank you, sisters, but I wish to die at my place of execution).

She dies, the stage instructions indicate, in the position in which she is shown in the famous recumbent figure by Stefano Maderno beneath the high altar in the Basilica of St. Cecilia. Maderno's sculpture is said to reproduce the attitude of the Saint's body as it was found in 1599, when the sarcophagus, which had been taken from the catacombs to the church in 821, was opened.

ADRIANO LUALDI (1875-1971) was a highly trained composer who had studied in Venice under Wolf-Ferrari. His music was of a firmly conservative stamp. He was also a conductor and a writer on all matters musical. From early on he was a keen supporter of Italian fascism, though whether out of conviction or for self-promotion is, as in so many cases, unclear. Either way, he held a series of offices of ascending importance in the

musico-political area. After a period of "retirement" from 1943 to 1949 he became director of the Florence Conservatory. He wrote about half a dozen operas and about a dozen instrumental and choral works. *Le Furie d'Arlecchino*, a miniature opera in one act, was first produced in Buenos Aires on 19 June 1924. The music is very much in the vein of Puccini.

FRANZ LEHÁR (1870 Komárom, Austro-Hungary, now Slovakia-1948 Bad Ischl, near Salzburg) was the son of an Austrian bandmaster and a Hungarian mother of German descent. He studied violin and composition at the Prague Conservatoire, where Dvorák advised him to concentrate on composition. His studies finished, he became assistant bandmaster to his father and in 1902 conductor of the Theater an der Wien. He composed in various genre of music, but it is for his operettas that his name has remained a household word.

With *Zigeunerliebe* in 1920 Lehár began a long and highly successful association with Richard Tauber. As each new work appeared audiences listened out for the "Tauberlied". However, after 1933 and 1938 Tauber was no longer welcome in Germany and Austria respectively. Further, Lehár's own relationship with the New Order was strained as his wife was Jewish. However, such was his popularity that she was given the status of Honorary Aryan. There was also the question of his predominantly Jewish librettists.

Lehár and Tauber met up again after the war, but the magic had gone. *Frasquita* was first performed in Vienna in 1922. The first London performance was at the Prince's Theatre in 1925. The revised French version was first given in 1933 at the Opéra Comique.

LOUIS ARNOULT (Paris 1901-) studied first with Mme. Fourestier and G. Paulet and then at the Conservatoire National, Paris from 1924 to 1928. He won a considerable number of prizes. His career consisted of three broad phases: first he was a concert singer, then he appeared on the stage and finally he was a soloist in church and oratorio works. He sang at the Opéra Comique from 1929 until 1956 and at the Opéra from 1934 to 1954. He appeared in Barcelona, Brussels and in the major provincial French houses. He also sang on the radio in operas and concerts. His repertoire of operas was large and included: *Acis et Galathée* (Lully), *La Bohème*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Faust*, *L'Heure Espagnole* (Ravel), *Mignon*, *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, *La Traviata*, *Werther* and *Die Zauberflöte*. He was also much acclaimed as an operetta singer. He had a second career as a teacher at the Conservatoire International de Musique, Paris.

ENZO de MURO LOMANTO né Vincenzo de Muro (Canosa di Puglia, Apulia, S. Italy 1902-Naples 1952) studied at the University of Naples and underwent vocal training at the San Pietro a Majella, Naples. He completed his vocal studies with Fernando De Lucia. He made his début in 1925 as Alfredo in *La Traviata* at the Teatro Municipale, Catanzaro, Calabria. In the same year he sang Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at the Teatro San Carlo, Naples, his first significant success, and Il Duca di Mantua in *Rigoletto*. He made guest appearances in Budapest and Madrid in 1927 and engagements followed in the major houses of France and

Switzerland. He was at la Scala Milan from 1927 to 1931. His début there was as Tonio in *La Fille du Régiment* with Toti dal Monte in the title role. They next appeared together in *Don Pasquale*. In 1929 he sang in the première of *Il Re* by Giordano. At la Scala he also appeared as Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*) and Fenton (*Falstaff*). He appeared in Berlin in 1929 as part of the la Scala Company. During the '30s he sang frequently in Holland with the Italian Opera Company and also in guest appearances in Barcelona, Copenhagen, Paris and Vienna. He continued to sing at la Scala as late as 1943. For professional purposes he combined de Muro, his mother's name, to his own name to avoid confusion with the tenor Bernado de Muro. From 1929 to 1932 he was married Toti dal Monte. There was one daughter. Although Maria Zamboni's part in this recording is the smaller one, her presence allows us to include the remarkably beautiful voice and very stylish singing of Enzo de Muro Lomanto.

CLAUDIA MUZIO (Pavia 1889-Rome 1936) was born into a musical family. Her father was a stage director at Covent Garden and at the Metropolitan Opera, while her mother was a member of the chorus of the Metropolitan Opera. She studied the harp, but then turned to singing which she studied in Turin under Annetta Casaloni and in Milan under Elettra Callery-Viviani. In 1911 she made her début at the Teatro Petrarca, Arezzo as Puccini's Manon Lescaut. Just a year later at the Teatro dal Verme, Milan she had brilliant success in the same part. In the 1913 and 1914 at la Scala she was much acclaimed as Desdemona and as Fiora in Montemezzi's *L'Amore dei tre Ré*. In the same years she had great successes at the Teatro San Carlo, Naples and at London's Covent Garden, in the latter house appearing with Caruso in *La Bohème*. In 1915 and 1916 she was a great success at the Havana Opera and at the Metropolitan Opera, where she remained until 1921. In this house she sang in the world première of *Il Tabarro* in 1918, and in the local premières of *Eugen Onegin* in 1920, *Andrea Chénier* in 1921 and *Loreley* in 1922. From 1922 to 1932 she sang great success in Chicago and found time also to sing at the opening of the rebuilt Opera house in San Francisco and to make guest appearances in Cuba and South America. In 1926 she returned to Italy, where she was acclaimed in all the leading houses. Her superb acting abilities led to her becoming known as "The Duse of Opera". Desdemona, Maddalena (*Andrea Chénier*), Tosca and Violetta were probably her greatest parts.

CONCHITA SUPERVIA née María de la Concepción Supervia Pascual (Barcelona 1895-London 1936) was born into an old and well-connected Andalusian family. After attending at a local convent school she entered the Conservatori Superior de Música del Liceu, Barcelona at the age of 12 and studied under Ferrer and Goula. She first sang at the age of 15 in the zarzuela *Los Amantes de Teruel* by Bretón and in *Bianca di Beaulieu* by Cesar Stattes with a travelling Spanish company in Buenos Aires. Her first real success was gained in 1911, when at the age of 16 she sang Carmen at the Teatro Petruzzelli in Bari. In the same year she sang, again with great success, in the Italian première of *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Teatro Costanzi, Rome. Hariclea Darclée was Octavian. Supervia's repertoire at this time included: *Hänsel und Gretel*, *Mignon*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Samson et Dalila* and *Werther*. Besides singing in most of Italy's leading houses, Supervia

was also now singing to great acclaim in Barcelona, Chicago and Havana. At a concert in la Scala in 1926 she sang in the first performance of *El amor brujo* by de Falla and in 1929, also at la Scala, she sang in the first Italian performance of Ravel's *L'Heure Espagnole*. In Turin in 1925 Supervia began to sing the generally forgotten so-called Bel Canto operas of Rossini, such works as *La Cenerentola* and *L'Italiana in Algeri*. To these may be added *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, forgotten in the sense that Supervia revived it with Rosina in the original low-key. In 1932 she appeared at the Opéra Comique, Paris in the first performance of the French version of Lehár's *Frasquita*. In a film of 1934, *Evensong*, Supervia appeared as a young and rising artist usurping the place of an older singer, a thinly disguised Melba.

Supervia moved to London in 1931 to marry an English industrialist. Her last concert was in 1935 in Copenhagen. Early the following year she died in childbirth. The child was stillborn, but there was a surviving son by an earlier association.

In making these records from *Frasquita*, Supervia moved from her exclusive relationship with the Parlophone-Odeon group to the much smaller Ultraphone company and the Ultraphone company proclaimed proudly on its labels that Conchita Supervia and Louis Arnoult were créatrice et créateur à l'Opéra-Comique of the new French version of *Frasquita*.

MARIA ZAMBONI (Peschiera del Gardo 1895-Verona 1976) studied with M. Silva at the Conservatorio di Musica Arrigo Boito in Parma and made her début as Gounod's Marguérite at Piacenza in 1921. She sang with great success at la Scala, Milan from 1924 to 1927 and again from 1929 to 1931. Her appearances there included Liu in the world première of *Turandot* under Arturo Toscanini in 1926. From 1921 to 1936 she sang with great success in the opera houses of South America. She retired in 1936, her last performance being as Eva in a radio broadcast of *Die Meistersinger*. For some years she taught in Milan and then retired to Verona.

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