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Interview

14th March 2018

Max Cencic on Porpora



by Katherine Cooper

Regular readers may recall how much I enjoyed the Viennese countertenor Max Cencic's elegantly-sung tribute to Nicola Porpora, the Italian operatic composer and singing-teacher who was responsible for training two of the greatest singers of the eighteenth century, Farinelli and Caffarelli. It was a huge pleasure to speak to Max (who is an astute, imaginative stage-director and something of an impresario as well

as a very fine singer) recently about the draconian demands of Porpora's vocal writing, his relationship with his singing-students and contemporaries, and the impact which he (as well as his two star pupils) had on the evolution of *opera seria*...



Porpora produced a vast amount of very attractive music (almost sixty operas) but his popularity was relatively short-lived, even within his own lifetime: why do you think he has never gained the foothold of Handel or Vivaldi?

I think it's an extremely simple explanation: these sorts of operas are extraordinarily complex and they need exceptional singers who are technically very agile and virtuosic, so it's not at all easy to perform or produce them. And things are also incredibly demanding for the orchestra in places: the horn parts are so difficult that you may only find a few people world-wide who can actually play them! Secondly, of course, it's a question of time and fashion: things are forever falling in and out of style, and we just have to excavate them! It's really nice to see people once again finding this attachment to a type of music that can be truly mesmerising - out of this world, in fact!

In the booklet-notes you describe Porpora as being 'almost sadistic' - could you tell me a little more about how he goes above and beyond what his contemporaries were asking from singers?

I think that his way of writing is very much based on technical demands and the idea of 'stages of excellence'. If you sing the operas of Hasse or Handel or Vinci, you will find yourself vocally way more comfortable with that music than with Porpora: in fact there's a certain degree of *discomfort* about the way he writes for singers. There are always very long vocal lines that you really have to respect, and he writes so densely that you have no chance to breathe in between phrases: you have to seize any chance you have to take a huge amount of air, because the chances are it's going to have to last you a very long time! That kind of thing is very technical and you *have* to master it physically: it's not the kind of music where you can look over the score two weeks before you have to sing it and you'll have it in your voice, it's something that you really have to work on for months to get it into the body.

But more generally, I think that Handel, Hasse, Vinci and Porpora are worlds apart: certainly they tried to copy each other a little bit here and there, but surely that doesn't preclude them having their own agendas, styles and worlds. And to me they each have their own specialities, their own beauty and their own exoticness.

Do you ever get the sense that Porpora reacted against the eighteenth-century tendency to cater to the strengths (and even whims) of star singers by deliberately setting out to challenge them with his writing?

Yes, I do think he challenged them - in a way to underline his dominance both as a singing-teacher and as somebody who wanted to influence the development of opera seria, which indeed he did for a certain period of his life. But that's assumption, really, because there is only very scant documentation of his private exchanges with people...

On which note, do we have any way of knowing what his teaching-methods were like - either from written accounts or from surviving copies of the exercises he devised or used?

Not quite. There are solfeggi, and there are secondary sources from different castrati (one in particular in Vienna who wrote a treatise on the singing technique of the castrati) from which we can basically reconstruct what life was like in the Neapolitan conservatory, where Porpora was a teacher: when they got up, how many hours they worked, what kind of teaching procedures were in place. But as far as we know there's absolutely nothing that survives in his own hand explaining his technique or his teaching-methods.

So little of Porpora's music exists in modern editions: how much archive work and editing was involved, and what was the condition of the manuscripts like?

The manuscripts were actually copies, which were used in Rome for the original performances, so they were really quite tidy! We weren't dealing with handwriting that was completely illegible, like with Bach: provided you're comfortable with reading the old clefs, you could basically perform straight from scores which date from the time of the premieres without even transcribing them into modern notation.

As well as the sixty-odd operas which he composed, Porpora also leaves an indirect legacy in terms of the music which was written for his two star pupils: Farinelli and Caffarelli. Which of the two singers would you say was the most influential?

Today people know a lot about Farinelli because of the movie [released in 1994 and directed by Gérard Corbiau], but much of the music he inspired honestly wasn't the best in the world: none of the composers that he chose to work with are names that mean much to us today. He never worked with Handel, for instance, and (Porpora excepted) he tended to gravitate towards minor composers like Ariosti and his own brother Riccardo Broschi, whose names come up now and again but didn't produce much that was of great quality. I think that part of the reason why Farinelli was more of a phenomenon [than Caffarelli] during his own lifetime was simply because he looked good: he was a beautiful man, and secondly he had this voice that was incredibly acrobatic. But if you look at the arias which were written for him, there's no compositional depth, because they always left the line open for him to do his own thing. In that sense he was almost like a pop artist, but in terms of musical and artistic value, there wasn't really much behind it - if you look at the literature that exists about him and then compare the music itself, it's quite surprising!

With hindsight Caffarelli was by far the more interesting singer of the two: he collaborated with the really important composers like Handel, Hasse, Porpora and Gluck, so if you look at the repertoire that he inspired and sang it's way better than a lot of what was written for Farinelli. Handel wrote two operas for him, one of which is *Serse*, and one of which is *Faramondo*, which I recorded many years ago and is far less well known. And Caffarelli was the star of the original production of *Germanico*, singing the role of Arminio, which was done by Mary-Ellen Nesi on our recording.

Your colleagues Philippe Jaroussky and Franco Fagioli have both released albums dedicated to Porpora's arias for Farinelli and Caffarelli respectively - did you make a conscious choice to shine a light on his writing for other singers?

It's just not my range! Farinelli and Caffarelli were high mezzo-sopranos who spent a lot of time in their upper registers, and that's not me at all. But there were other star singers of my tessitura, for whom some of the greatest roles in eighteenth-century opera were written: Handel composed the title-roles in *Giulio Cesare*, *Tolomeo* and *Riccardo Primo* for Senesino, and *Arminio* for Domenico Annibali, who also created 'my' role in Porpora's *Germanico*. I find myself very comfortable in Annibali's range - I recorded Arminio recently [both for Decca and on DVD/Blu-ray in a production from Karlsruhe, which is out on 13th April], and [the Dresden version of] Hasse's *Siroe* which was also composed for him, so I've been going through a phase of singing his roles over the last few years!

Finally, you're doing a lot of directing in addition to your singing work these days: do you have any plans to put Porpora on stage with your production company Parnassus Arts?

I'm constantly staging different works, but for the moment I'm having quite a traditional period! I'm doing Rossini's *La donna del lago* in April/May and in January 2019 I'm staging *Serse* (in which I'll also be singing Arsamenes) in Karlsruhe at the Handel Festival. The more exotic operas unfortunately will have to wait...!



Nicola Porpora: Opera Arias

Max Cencic (countertenor), Armonia Atenea, George Petrou
Available Formats: CD, MP3, CD Quality FLAC, Hi-Res FLAC



Porpora: Germanico in Germania

Max Cencic, Julia Lezhneva, Mary-Ellen Nesi, Juan Sancho, Dilyara Idrisova, Hasnaa Bennani, Capella Cracoviensis, Jan Tomasz Adamus
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Farinelli was by far the more interesting singer of the two: he collaborated with the really important composers like Handel, Hasse, Porpora and Gluck, so if you look at the repertoire that he performed and sang it's way better than a lot of what was written for Farinelli. Handel wrote two operas for him, one of which is *Serse*, and one of which is *Faramondo*, which I recorded many years ago and is far less well known. And Caffarelli was the star of the original production of *Germanico*, singing the role of Arminio, which was done by Mary-Ellen Nesi on our recording.

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Max Emanuel Cencic: Porpora

Der CD-Tipp der Woche in Canapé

Von Gabi Szarvas

[Vorlesen](#)

Sendung: Sonntag 22.04.2018 ca. 15.20 Uhr

Für Aufsehen sorgte er schon im zarten Alter von sechs Jahren, als er im Fernsehen mit glockenheller Stimme und wendiger Kehle Mozarts schwindelerregend virtuose Königin der Nacht-Arie aus der Zauberflöte sang. Bis heute hat sich der gebürtige Kroat und Wahl-Wiener Max Emanuel Cencic diese helle, flexible und geläufige Stimme bewahrt, seit 2001 im Countertenorfach. Die jüngste CD des ehemaligen Wiener Sängerknaben feiert den Italiener Nicola Porpora - zum 250. Todestag. Ein Meister der Darstellung des komplexen Innenlebens seiner Bühnenfiguren, strenger Gesangs-Lehrer und talentierter Komponist, der seinen Protagonisten alles abverlangte, was ihre Stimmen hergaben: Sprünge, Skalen, Triller, lange Phrasen – und die große Melodie.



Max Emanuel Cencic

Vierzehn ganz unterschiedliche Arien aus neun Opern Porporas hat Max Emanuel Cencic für seine neue CD ausgesucht, darunter sieben Ersteinspielungen. Dabei durchlebt der feinfühlig, sinnfreudige Countertenor ein Wechselbad der Gefühle: von zu Tode betrübt bis in Liebe entbrannt, jede Menge sinnliche Fülle, Witz, Lust an der Travestie, Glamour und virtuose Brillanz.

So kann der Zuhörer auf dieser neuen CD tief eintauchen in eine schillernde Zeit, in der Kastraten wie Caffarelli, Farinelli oder Porporino auf den Bühnen Europas atemberaubende Kostproben ihre einzigartige Gesangkunst zum Besten gaben, Komponisten wie Porpora, Händel und Hasse mit immer neuen kreativen Ausgüssen um die Gunst ihres Publikums buhlten, und erbitterte Konkurrenzkämpfe das Operngeschäft bestimmten. Noch wichtiger für Max Emanuel Cencic: dass seine CD vor allem eines ist: seine ganz persönliche Hommage an Porpora.

Als eingespielte Partner stehen Max Emanuel Cencic auch auf seinem Decca-Neuling wieder das Originalklangensemble Armonia Atenea und George Petrou zur Seite.



Max Emanuel Cencic - Opera Arias

Infos zur CD:

Max Emanuel Cencic: Porpora

Zum 250. Todestag des Komponisten Nicola Porpora

Arien aus den Opern Ezio, Meride e Selinunte, Ifigenia in Aulide, Filandro, Poro, Enea nel Lazio, Il Trionfo di Camilla, Carlo il calvo & Arianna in Nasso (darunter 7 Erstaufnahmen)



Max Emanuel Cencic

Max Emanuel Cencic (Countertenor)

George Petrou

Armonia Atenea

Label: Decca

Bestellnummer: 0002894832359

Mehr dazu auch unter:

<http://www.cencic.com/>

Das ganze Interview mit Max Emanuel Cencic finden Sie hier zum Nachhören:



MusikWelt

[Max Emanuel Cencic: Arien von Nicola Porpora](#)

Für Aufsehen sorgte er schon im zarten Alter von sechs Jahren, als er im Fernsehen mit glockenheller Stimme und wendiger Kehle Mozarts virtuos-herausfordernde Königin der Nacht-Arie aus der Zauberflöte sang. Max Emanuel Cencics jüngste CD beschäftigt sich mit Arien des Italieners Nicola Porpora.



MAX EMANUEL CENCIC MIT OPERNARIEN BEI DECCA

UND NOCH MEHR VON POPORA

Die neue CD von **Max Emanuel Cencic** bei **Decca (483 3235)** mit **Opernarien von Nicola Porpora** erlaubt einen interessanten Vergleich mit einer Platte von **Franco Fagioli**, der bei seiner früheren Stammfirma **naïve** bereits 2013 ein solches Programm unter dem Titel *Il maestro* aufgenommen hatte. Allerdings überschneidet sich bei den zwei Counterertenören nur ein einziger Titel – Valentinianos Arie „*Se tu la reggi al volo*“ aus *Ezio*, mit der beide Interpreten ihr Programm eröffnen. Fagioli singt sie mit einer Stimme von vibrierender Erregung, auftrumpfend und in souveräner Bewältigung der langen Koloraturpassagen. Cencic dagegen bringt sie mit weniger Vehemenz, nicht so aufregend, mit warmem, gerundetem Ton. In der Virtuosität steht er Fagioli in nichts nach. Auch seine Interpretation wird vom begleitenden Orchester, der **Armonia Atenea** unter **George Petrou**, pompös mit festlichem Bläserglanz eingeleitet. Das Ensemble besticht bis zum Ende mit ungemein farbigem Spiel und raffinierten Klangeffekten.

Selbst wenn die Auswahl sonst voneinander abweicht, ermöglicht sie doch eine **aufschlussreiche Gegenüberstellung der beiden Sänger** mit ihren Stimmen, dem Ausdrucksradius und Interpretationsstil. Hier soll der Fokus natürlich auf der Neuveröffentlichung von Max Emanuel Cencic liegen, der seine Platte anlässlich des 250. Todestages von Porpora vorlegt und 14 Arien offeriert, davon sieben Weltpremieren. Dazu zählt eine weitere Arie aus *Ezio* – diesmal die des Titelhelden „*Lieto sarò*“, die in freudigem Jubel das Leben und die Liebe besingt und dem Sänger jauchzende Emphase ermöglicht. Aus dem Jahre 1726 stammt die in Venedig uraufgeführte *Meride e Selinunte*, aus der Ericleas „*Torbido intorno*“ ertönt, in der sich Stimme und Streicher kunstvoll verflechten.

In den 1730er Jahren komponierte Porpora in London drei Opern im direkten Wettbewerb mit Händel: *Arianna in Nasso* 1733, aus der als letzter Titel der Anthologie Teseos „*Nume che reggi*“ erklingt. Ein Jahr später kam *Enea nel Lazio* zur Uraufführung, aus dem des Titelhelden „*Chi vuol salva la patria*“ zu hören ist – ein patriotischer Aufruf für Vaterland und Ehre mit effektvollem Zierwerk. Und 1735 kam *Ifigenia in Aulide* heraus, aus der die Arie des Agamemnone „*Tu, spietato*“ ertönt, welche einen existentiellen Ausnahmezustand der Figur mit rasenden Koloraturgirlanden schildert. Cencic zeigt sich hier erneut als virtuoser Meister seines Fachs. Die folgende Arie des Filandro aus der gleichnamigen Oper, „*Ove l'erbetta*“, ist ein wunderbar getragenes Stück, das ein Naturbild malt und Cencic Gelegenheit bietet, seine lyrische Stimmkultur zu demonstrieren. Der nächste Titel, Poros „*Destrier, che all'armi usato*“, sorgt mit seinem energisch-kämpferischen Duktus wieder für einen spannungsreichen Kontrast.

Alle drei Arien des Lottario aus dem in Rom 1738 uraufgeführten *Carlo il Calvo* sind Ersteinspielungen und von höchst unterschiedlicher Stimmung. „*Se rea ti vuole*“ ist geprägt von einem rasanten Koloraturfeuerwerk in exponierter Tessitura. „*Quando s'oscura il cielo*“ gibt sich sanft und getragen, bringt die klavervoll-sonore Mittellage des Counters zu schöner Wirkung. „*So che tiranno*“ in eiligem Tempo bedeutet erneut eine große Herausforderung an die Bravour des Interpreten, die Cencic glänzend besteht.

Aus *Il trionfo di Camilla*, 1740 im Teatro San Carlo Neapel uraufgeführt, bietet Cencic zwei Arien des Turno von ganz unterschiedlicher Couleur – „*Va per le vene*“ in scheinbar endlos langen Phrasen von düster-beklommener Stimmung und „*Torcere il corso*“ als bewegtes Sinnbild eines Flusses, dessen Verlauf man ändern kann, nicht aber die Gefühle eines Herzens. Auch Filandros „*D'esser già parmi*“ schildert als Metapher einen Apfelbaum im Sturm in Form von aufgewühlten Koloraturketten.

Nach seiner überzeugenden Interpretation des Titelhelden in der Einspielung von Porporas *Germanico in Germania* (ebenfalls bei Decca) hat Max Emanuel Cencic mit diesem Recital dem großen Gesangslehrer und Komponisten eine gelungene Reverenz erwiesen, die für die Verbreitung von Porporas Werk von eminenter Bedeutung sein dürfte. **Bernd Hoppe**



MAX EMANUEL CENCIC

Nicola Porpora Opera Arias

DECCA 483 3235, 1 CD

Vor 250 Jahren starb der 1686 geborene Komponist Nicola Antonio Porpora in seiner Geburtsstadt Neapel im Alter von 82 Jahren. Für den Countertenor **Max Emanuel Cencic** ist das ein willkommener Anlass, mit der Gesamtaufnahme der Oper »Germanico in Germania« (OG 3/2018) und jetzt mit einer vierzehn Arien umfassenden CD auf diesen großen, fast vergessenen Komponisten aufmerksam zu machen. Porpora war auch ein berühmter Gesangslehrer, der die großen Stars des 18. Jahrhunderts zu seinen Schülern zählen konnte: Caffarelli, Senesino, Farinelli und viele mehr – sie alle haben bei ihm gelernt. Auf Einladung der Opera of the Nobility war er in den 1730er-Jahren längere Zeit in London und damit sogar Konkurrent von Händel, der damals für das Covent Garden Theatre komponierte. Beide Komponisten haben sich vermutlich gegenseitig durchaus sehr geschätzt, über ein Treffen aber ist nichts bekannt.

Cencic fragt: „Wie können wir die großen Kastraten nachahmen?“ Und meint bescheiden: „Das lässt

sich kaum festlegen, aber diese Stimmen waren die Seele von Porporas Musik.“ Mit seiner Arien-Auswahl aber gibt er indirekt eine Antwort: Sein Gesang ist derart faszinierend, dass man sich eine Steigerung durch einen Kastraten nicht vorstellen kann. Sein Countertenor verströmt pures Gold, ist samtlich weich und wird so außergewöhnlich sicher geführt, dass es einem den Atem verschlägt. Bemerkenswert tiefe Töne meistert

Cencic mit der gleichen Souveränität wie die vertracktesten Koloraturfeuerwerke. Sein Partner am Pult des Orchesters Armonia Atenea ist der großartige **George Petrou**, der Porporas ebenso brillante wie auch herzbewegende Musik mit einer rhythmischen Verve dirigiert, die so mitreißend ist und so in die Füße geht, dass es schwer fällt, ruhig auf dem Stuhl sitzen zu bleiben. Was für eine berückend schöne Hommage. (JG)




M.E. Cencic



CD

NICOLA PORPORA: OPERNARIEN

Max Emanuel Cencic, Armonia Atenea, George Petrou
Label: Decca; Vertrieb: Universal, 1 CD

 Schon manche Komponisten-Mode ging von Solo-Recitals aus. Cecilia Bartoli schaffte es für Vivaldi. Marilyn Horne für Rossini. Doch in diesen Fällen waren flankierende Opern-Inszenierungen ein entscheidender Faktor der Wiederentdeckung. Davon ist leider im Fall von Nicola Porpora bislang wenig zu spüren. Nur Heidelberg, Versailles und das wackere Theater an der Wien haben sich für den wichtigsten Multiplikator der neapolitanischen Opera seria eingesetzt. Zu wenige Häuser bislang, um von einer echten Porpora-Renaissance sprechen zu können.

Dabei ist das Konzeptalbum von Max Emanuel Cencic bereits die vierte Solo-CD, die ausschließlich Arien Porporas gewidmet ist (nach Karina Gauvin, Philippe Jaroussky und Franco Fagioli). Bei sieben von 14 Arien handelt es sich um Weltersteinspielungen. Cencic kommt außerdem das Verdienst zu, die bislang prominenteste Gesamtaufnahme einer Porpora-Oper initiiert zu haben (*Germanico in Germania*, Decca).

Während sich mit dem Album von Jaroussky (das nur Farinelli-Arien enthält) keine Überschneidungen ergeben, scheint Cencic mit Franco Fagioli einen direkten Vergleich herausfordern zu wollen. Bei sieben von 14 Arien handelt es sich um Weltersteinspielungen. Cencic kommt außerdem das Verdienst zu, die bislang prominenteste Gesamtaufnahme einer Porpora-Oper initiiert zu haben. Die Countertenorstimme Cencics erweist sich als etwas fülliger, klangschöner, wenn auch etwas tiefer veranlagt als bei Fagioli. Etwas brustiger kommen die Töne der Mittellage. Deklassierend wirkt der Vergleich für keinen von beiden Sängern.

Noch etwas: Beide Countertenöre neigen zum leicht altdamenhaften Auftritt mit vokalem „Collier-Griff“. Also mit Inklination zum effeminiert-theatralischen Posieren. Auch ist ein gewisser pauschaler Zugriff im Fall von Cencic nicht ganz abzuleugnen. Worin es in diesen Arien gehen mag, ist aus der Interpretation nicht unbedingt zu erraten. Der Hang zur dramatischen Exaltation dagegen findet sich durchaus, ob es sich nun um Enea, Ezio oder Filandro dreht. Bei der Arie des Poro („Destrier, che all’armi usato“) muss Cencic in der Tiefe leicht nachdrücken. Was an der hochkompetenten Darstellung grundsätzlich nichts ändert. Ganz hinreißend wird er da, wo er aller dramatischen Aufregung entsagen darf – und ganz ruhig geradeaus singt. Das ist bei Teseo aus *Arianna in Nasso* der Fall, ebenso bei der Arie des Turno aus *Il trionfo di Camilla* und – absolut wundervoll! – beim Lottario aus *Carlo il Calvo* (2. Akt). Es ist der Höhepunkt des Ganzen.

Man kommt also bei Cencic zum paradoxerweise umgekehrten Ergebnis im Vergleich zu den meisten seiner Kollegen. Diese sind dort am Besten, wo sie richtig Purzelbäume schlagen. Cencic da, wo er sich versenkt und meditativ wird.

Kai Luehrs-Kaiser

26 January 2018

CD REVIEW: Nicola Antonio Porpora — GERMANICO IN GERMANIA (M. E. Cencić, J. Lezhneva, M.-E. Nesi, J. Sancho, D. Idrisova, H. Bennani; DECCA 483 1523)



NICOLA ANTONIO PORPORA (1696–1768). *Germanico in Germania*—Max Emanuel Cencić (Germanico), Julia Lezhneva (Ersinda), Mary-ElLEN Nesi (Arminio), Juan Sancho (Segeste), Dilyara Idrisova (Rosmonda), Hasnaa Bennani (Cecina), Capella Cracoviensis; Jan Tomasz Adamus, conductor [Recorded at Radio Kraków, Kraków, Poland, 23 July–3 August 2016; DECCA 483 1523; 3 CDs, 217.39. Available from Amazon (USA), fnac (France), iTunes, jpc (Germany), Presto Classical (UK), and major music retailers]

Anyone who saw Gérard Corbiau's fanciful 1994 cinematic reimagining of the life of the celebrated castrato Farnelli was introduced to a frazzled, ill-tempered Nicola Antonio Porpora who bullied his illustrious pupil into becoming one of history's most revered singers. Corbiau's ope of a Porpora, impersonated with consummate gruffness by Omer Antonutti, was undeniably entertaining and effective as a component of a narrative that portrayed Farnelli as a hapless victim of fate, but this boorish incarnation of the composer little resembles the Porpora who emerges from his surviving music, too little of which has been made available via good-quality recordings to listeners willing to reassess the man and his work.

Born in Naples in 1696, Porpora was a product of the cosmopolitan musical culture of his native city, dominated during his formative years by Alessandro Scarlatti, whose compositional style strongly influenced the young Porpora's artistic development. No less significant in the evolution of Porpora's own style, particularly in writing for the voice, was his encounter with the poet Pietro Antonio Domenico Trippassi, then not yet known as Metastasio; the most renowned librettist of the first half of the Eighteenth Century, he would author the texts for some of Porpora's most successful operas. Success was not something to which Porpora ever became accustomed, however. Praised and popular at times in his career, his compositions often sprang to life amidst difficult circumstances.

Though his operas gained traction with London audiences during his much-publicized rivalry with Georg Friedrich Händel in the 1730s, the company for which they were written, the Opera of the Nobility, nonetheless failed. Perhaps most cruelly Porpora suffered the fate of outliving appreciation of his individual musical language. By the time that he returned to Naples in 1759, his artistic journey having taken him to many of Europe's music-loving metropolises, the emerging *stile galante* was rapidly supplanting the florid Baroque style of which Porpora was an exponent. Prone to hardship even when he employed as a scantily-paid valet the young Joseph Haydn, who would later acknowledge the obstinate Neapolitan as a teacher of inestimable value to his musical education, Porpora was tormented during the final years of his life by debilitating poverty. At the time of his death in 1768, he lacked the money to pay for his own burial.

It is principally as a composer that Porpora is remembered in the Twenty-First Century, but his legacy as a trainer of voices, glimpsed in Corbiau's film, endured well into the Nineteenth Century, when castrati last originated rôles in Europe's opera houses. Like the similarly sensationalized depiction of Antonio Salieri in Peter Shaffer's play and Miloš Forman's film *Amadeus*, Corbiau's treatment of Porpora in *Farnelli* is not entirely without merit: injurious as it is to historical accuracy, there is undeniable benefit in even a brief, unrealistic glance at Porpora's impact on vocal tutelage. The glimmer of the meticulously-honed pedagogy that, enabling him to write masterfully for the voices known to him, facilitated commissions to compose operas like his 1732 *Germanico in Germania* increased the public's curiosity about Porpora's music. Now, more than three decades after the film's theatrical release, with the availability of singers capable of meeting the grueling demands of Porpora's vocal writing, reviving the composer's operas is again feasible. These rebirths of curiosity and feasibility intersect persuasively in this recording of *Germanico in Germania*.

First performed in Rome's Teatro Capranica in February 1732, Porpora's setting of a finely-articulated libretto by Niccolò Tommaseo introduces the conflict between Cecina, the figurehead of Roman authority in the feudal domains that constitute modern Germany, and the fiercely independent Arminio, leader of a realm under Rome's unwanted domination. This being Baroque opera, the courses of neither love nor war proceed smoothly, here complicated by the struggles of a Germanic chieftain loyal to Rome, Segeste, whose two daughters' fealties are divided between embracing and resisting Roman rule. To the credit of composer and librettist, as well as to the performance that transpires on this recording, what amounts to a convoluted story told in a score of long duration is surprisingly easy to follow. The extensive passages of secco recitative move swiftly but logically, aided immeasurably by the clarity and commitment with which they are sung in this performance.

Recorded in the studios of Radio Kraków, this performance plays out in an acoustical space that falls marginally short of DECCA's long-established high standards of technological excellence. The timbres of the instruments of **Capella Cracoviensis** are sometimes adversely affected, giving the recording an one-dimensional, studio-bound setting in which musicians, conductor, and singers must work harder to enliven the performance. By adopting generally quick tempi, **Jan Tomasz Adamus** strives to maintain musical propulsion throughout the performance, but there are passages in which the singers might have benefited from more sympathetic leadership and stricter, more consistent guidance of ornamentation.

Supplementing the conductor's own efforts at the keyboard, harpsichordist **Marcin Świątkiewicz** plays nimbly—slightly too nimbly in some instances. It is unlikely that anyone listens to Baroque opera solely in order to enjoy secco recitatives, no matter how cleverly they are accompanied. In this performance, the accompaniments are indeed very clever and irreproachably musical but sometimes overwrought. **Tiziana Anzino** injects the theorbo into the soundscape with expert judgement, however, balancing the continuo and heightening the expressivity of several key scenes. The interplay of horn players **Anneke Scott**, **Olivier Picon**, and, in Cecina's Act Two aria 'Se dopo mi procella,' **Martin Lawrence** yields exhilarating if not always attractive realizations of Porpora's punishing writing for the valveless horns. The recording's dry acoustic harshens the orchestral sonorities, but the sheen of the players' collective virtuosity is undimmed. *Germanico in Germania* is not an opera that can triumph without support from pit and podium, and, overcoming a few problems, Capella Cracoviensis and Adamus offer the singers a setting in which triumph is within reach.

Ever a vivid presence who figuratively transports a recorded performance from studio to stage, tenor **Juan Sancho** contributes some of his finest singing on disc to date in this traversal of *Germanico in Germania*. He has in the rôle of Segeste, the Germanic chieftain who has embraced Roman citizenship, an exceptionally congenial part with vocal writing that exploits the strongest of his technical and interpretive skills. As in many of his recorded performances, Sancho sets an example for his colleagues with his alert, responsive singing of recitatives. In Act One, he sings Segeste's aria 'Nocchier, che mai non vide l'orror della tempesta' with blazing tone and fiery demeanor, spotlighting the character's temperamental kinship with Bajazet in Händel's *Tamerlano*. His aria in Act Two, 'Scoglio apestre in mezzo all'onde,' inhabits a vastly different emotional world, and, prefaced by particularly pointed delivery of recitative, the tenor limns the transition with resourcefulness, luring the listener into the quicksand of Segeste's predicament.

Sancho can reach greater heights of dramatic intensity in a few bars of accompanied recitative than some singers attain in ten-minute arias, as he demonstrates in his zealous delivery of the accompanied 'Entra del vostro schermo' in Act Three of *Germanico in Germania*. Segeste's final aria, 'Saggio è il cultor,' is sung with strength and subtlety. With the exceptions of the parts in his London operas and oratorios that Händel wrote for John Beard, rôles for tenor in Baroque works rarely achieved the levels of distinction occupied by the notable castrato parts, but Sancho's portrayal of Segeste takes full advantage of every detail of characterization devised by Porpora and Coluzzi. Vocally, he has few rivals in music of this vintage, his domination of which he increases with this performance.

Since her earliest performances, **Julia Lezhneva** has reliably displayed extraordinary technical prowess that thrives in the bravura excesses of Baroque music. Nevertheless, the expressive maturity of her depiction of Segeste's younger, Rome-friendly daughter Ersinda in this performance is as impressive as her confident handling of Porpora's music. More so than in any of her previous recordings, Lezhneva connects with the character on a profound level, conveying the psychological conflict of a young girl both devoted to her father and his ideology and sensitive to her sister's staunch support of her husband in defiance of their father. Ersinda's inherent naïveté does not preclude flashes of ardor, here invigorated by Lezhneva's agile vocalism. The sole problem with the soprano's singing of Ersinda's first aria in Act One, 'Al sole i lumi pria mancheranno,' is the over-ambitious embellishment, which causes the intended coloratura feats to seem slightly beyond the singer's capacity to execute them. This is especially unfortunate as no proof of Lezhneva's talents other than her unflappable negotiations of the difficulties of Porpora's vocal lines is required.

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Julia Lezhneva subsequently sings the aria 'Se sposa d'un Romano' with unerring control and poise, the meaning of the text palpably imparted. She further refines her depiction of Ersinda with singing in Act Two in which virtuosity and insightfulness are united in service to the drama. The savage fiorature of 'Veder vicino il suo contento' are tamed with astonishing ease, her effortlessly sparkling trills recall Beverly Sills's finest singing. The dramatic consequence contrast with 'Sorge dall'onde' is accentuated without exaggeration, Lezhneva's clear articulation of vowels sharpening the focus of her analysis of Ersinda's actions and motivations. In the soprano's performance in her account of the Act Three aria 'Se possono i tuoi dorni ognor penar.' The best of her artistry shines in her singing of this music: the voice is confident, of course, but the heart is no less awe-inspiring. Along the course of her pursuit of vocal excellence, Lezhneva has also deepened her understanding of the emotional significance of an operatic character to life, and in this performance she expresses Ersinda's feelings as fully as she sings her music.

In Morocco, soprano **Hasnaa Bennani** brings to her performance as the Roman captain arias in *Germanico in Germania* a wealth of experience in French Baroque repertoire that has led her instincts for finding the expressive cores of dizzying fiorature. The results of this are evident in every moment of Bennani's singing in this performance. A dynamic range in recitatives, she brings similar boldness to Cecina's aria in Act One, 'Splende per amarti un bel sereno volto,' voicing both words and music with fervor. She is wholly in her element in Cecina's accompagnato exchange with Arminio in Act Two, unleashing volleys of ly-aimed vocal javelins. The brilliance of Bennani's management of the punishing divisions rousing martial aria with obligato horns 'Se dopo ria procella' is matched by the sincerity of her singing of 'Serbami la tua fede,' the voice at its most prepossessing when the character is to adversity. In Act Three, Bennani makes the aria 'Serbare amore e fede' a sonorous statement of Cecina's principles. Porpora's music offers the soprano few moments in which to set her talent for lyrical singing, but Bennani convincingly projects Cecina's bravado without losing the lovely texture of her natural timbre.

The emendous promise that soprano **Dilyara Idrisova** revealed in her performance as Sabina in DECCA's studio recording of Pergolesi's *Adriano in Siria* comes to fruition in the young singer's portrayal of Arminio's wife and Segeste's daughter Rosmonda in *Germanico in Germania*. At with her father owing to her steadfast backing of her husband's opposition to Rome, the nined lady's introductory aria, 'Rivolgì a me le ciglia,' receives from Idrisova a captivatingly, the voice's intrinsic delicacy bolstered by adventurous but mostly tasteful ornamentation. The sequence from the accompagnato 'Sposa infelice, sventurata figlia' to the cyclonic aria 'Son nisoero naviglio' is spanned with imagination and idiomatic musicality, the singer's restraint in prone to flamboyance enhancing manifestation of the character's latent decency.

Idrisova's superb coloratura singing lends Rosmonda a more distinct profile in Act Two, not least in her aria 'Il padre mi sgrida,' in which the singer's imperturbable assurance is astounding. In her touching 'Priva del caro sposo' and the terzetto with Germanico and Arminio, Idrisova's onda refuges in the shadows of male egos. Her interpretation of the aria 'Dile, che ggio?' in Act Three is molded with punctilious care for maintaining the line without losing the poignancy of the text. Wife and husband blend their voices handsomely in onda's duetto with Arminio. Idrisova phrasing 'Se viver non poss'io' with guileless simplicity, considerable challenges of Porpora's music for Rosmonda notwithstanding, the touchstone of her performance is dramatic directness. The evenness of her singing is sporadically masked by thinning of the tone above the staff, but she is a Rosmonda whose few moments of stress are unflinchingly integrated into an honest depiction of a woman whose clinging loyalty is to love.

As in *Germanico's* Roman première by the celebrated castrato Caffarelli, Farnelli's rival for distinction of being remembered as Porpora's most accomplished pupil, the proud Teutonic in Arminio is inimical to the colonizing Romans despite the danger to himself and the lives he loves. Casting rôles written for Caffarelli can be one of the most daunting aspects of productions of Eighteenth-Century operas, generally both high and florid, music tailored to castrato's abilities is awkward for many countertenors and mezzo-sopranos. In this manna of *Germanico in Germania*, mezzo-soprano **Mary-ElLEN Nesi** sings Caffarelli's part wagger that suggests that the castrato's boasts that he rather than Farnelli was Porpora's first protégé were not unfounded. From Arminio's first entrance in Act One, Nesi makes the warrior a dangerous adversary for Rome and Germanico, presenting his defiance with a kably firm vocalism. There are ungainly moments in her register shifts in the aria 'Serba te il core,' but she commands the tessitura with few of the shortcomings that mar other singers' performances of similar music.

The uncommunicative power of Nesi's voicing of 'A lei, che il mondo adora' discloses the rewards of lists: shrewdness, but here and in the riveling accompagnato scene with Cecina in Act Two owe all the quality of the voice that compels admiration. The feindish divisions in 'Empi, se scioglio' are dispatched with galvanizing precision at a brisk tempo, elevating the tensions in her nuanced, radiantly beautiful account of 'Parto, ti lascio, o cara.' In Nesi's manna, the character's integrity is always apparent in the emotionally volatile terzetto with onda and Germanico. The mezzo-soprano wields such histrionic authority in her articulation mica del valor barbara sortel' that this scene in Act Three could veritably be an opera in its ght. The tenderness of this Arminio's discourse with his wife in the duetto with Rosmonda, 'rer non poss'io,' is endearing, and, in the opera's final scene, the accompagnato 'Vindice traws from Nesi declamation of poetic potency. Nesi has ever been a noteworthy interpreter originally composed for castrati, but her singing on these discs confirms that her work is 'the most cogent vindications of the rejuvenation of this repertoire.

In his enlightening gallery of portraits of forgotten operatic heroes that already includes slling portrayals of Händel's Alessandro, Arminio, and Ottono and Hasse's Siroe, intenor **Max Emanuel Cencić** here assumes command of the Roman forces in Porpora's oluzzi's Germania as Germanico, a rôle written for the castrato Domenico Annibali, who Iso Händel's first Arminio. Always possessing a timbral richness atypical of countertenors, Cencić's singing in *Germanico in Germania* exhibits an unforced grandeur that ideally suits the ous but ultimately magnanimous leader and Porpora's musical profile of him. Cencić's ation of Porpora's musical portrait continues with the release of a DECCA recital of arias in March 2019. [The mechanism of Germanico's Act One aria 'Questo è il valor aro d'un'anima romana?' suits the countertenor's emphatic style of utterance, and he ns an aura of sovereignty even when delving into the *da capo's* disparate sentiments. The ng fiorature of 'Qual turbine' are also familiar territory for Cencić, and he deftly steers a s through the music that maximizes excitement without devolving into vacuous standing. He sometimes indulges in the invention of elaborate cadenzas that would be at home in arias by Galuppi or Mysliveček, but his ornamentation of Germanico's vocal lines ably musical.

If not for the hive of buzzing strings into which Porpora plunges the melodic line, inco's Act Two aria 'Nasce da valle impura vapor che in alto ascende' might exert the of Händel's most beguiling arias, especially as Cencić sings it here, but the incessant din of accompaniment spoils the music beyond any singer's capacity to rescue it. Still, Cencić's onda of the aria is eloquent and charismatic. He joins the sedulous Arminio and mance in their terzetto with an incendiary statement of 'Temì lo sdegno mio, perfido traditor,' like some holders of political sway, this Germanico seems to actually listen to his foes. In uree, Cencić sings 'Per un momento ancora' ebulliently, and he accepts the resolution of his with opponents of his jurisdiction with affability. Like his previous portrayals for DECCA, izing back to a mellifluous Erster Knabe in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* whilst he was a member Wiener Sängerknaben, Cencić's Germanico is a winning synthesis of scholarship and nanship.

Porpora is last seen in the film *Farnelli*, he is a disheveled, disenfranchised remnant of a era. Sadly, history avows that, to some extent, Corbiau got this right. Porpora's life was bled by deprivation, but *Germanico in Germania* is not the work of an ered, perennially disagreeable man. His career was impaired by the eternal fickleness of n, but the silver lining of that capriciousness is the retribution of rediscovery. With this b- r recording of *Germanico in Germania*, Porpora claims this retribution at last.

Joseph Newsome

14 мая 2018 10:43

Макс Эмануэль Ценчич: "Цель искусства не только в том, чтобы развлекать"

28 мая в Концертном зале имени Чайковского состоится концерт-закрытие V Международного фестиваля вокальной музыки "Опера Априори". Гостем фестиваля во второй раз станет всемирно известный контратенор Макс Эмануэль Ценчич

Автор: [Илья Овчинников](#)



Макс Эмануэль Ценчич: "Цель искусства не только в том, чтобы развлекать"

Концерт пройдет в рамках мирового тура в поддержку диска Nicola Porroca Opera Arias. В программе – арии из опер "Ифигения в Авлиде", "Ариадна на Наксосе", "Фиделио", "Мерида из Селиунга", "Позифем" Порроца. Это уже пятое выступление Ценчича в Москве и горос – с Московским камерным оркестром Musica Viva под управлением Александра Рудина. В преддверии концерта Ценчич рассказал Илье Овчинникову о своих режиссерских опытах, об отношении к концертным исполнениям опер и о недостижимой мечте – трех недельного отпуска.

Вы выступаете и записываете с самыми разными коллективами: Antonio Atonio, Carolla Scavoicenis, Il Pomo d'Orto, Simeone Kili, Le Concert d'Astrée, Les Arts Florissants, Il Complesso Barocco, Il Vareschil, Al Ayre Español и другими. Как вы выбираете ансамбль для той или иной программы?

Я никоим образом их не выбираю, это они меня приглашают, а я обычно соглашаюсь, я очень открытый человек и люблю разнообразие, люблю новое. И если сотрудничество получается удачным, оно продолжается. У меня нет склонности к классификации: этот ансамбль лучше подходит для того, тот для другого... просто работаю то с одним, то с другим. Если завтра явится некто из Китая, к примеру, или уж не знаю откуда, и предложит выступить вместе, я отвечу – почему нет, конечно, давайте попробуем! Знаете, жизнь слишком коротка, чтобы жить за стеклом, хочется сделать ее как можно более насыщенной. Мне очень нравится работать с Antonio Atonio, мы давно знакомы, нравится Carolla Scavoicenis, а будут и другие. С Musica Viva у нас был концерт два года назад, оркестр очень хорош, я просто счастлив, что мы снова выступаем вместе. С Александром Рудиным мы встречаемся на сцене впервые, очень этого жду.

Два года назад вашим концертом с Musica Viva дирижировал Максим Емельянович, очень разносторонний музыкант: играет на клавишном, на фортепиано, на корнете – личность монотворского склада, согласны?

Да, абсолютно. (Смеется) Ему осталось только начать сочинять музыку! Тогда он окончательно заслужил это имя. Но это правда, он очень талантлив и обладает невероятной восприимчивостью музыканта, а от этого зависят и качество звука, и интерпретация как таковая. Музыцировать с ним – всегда большое удовольствие. С Максимом я в 2015 году записал свой сольный диск "Неаполитанские арии", неоднократно выступал с ним на концертах. Потому у нас было много разных проектов, но совместная запись только одна. Опер мы вместе не записывали. И пока не планируем.



Фото: Anna Hoffman

Этот диск вы записали с Il Pomo d'Orto; недавно мне довелось беседовать с Ринардо Минали, основателем ансамбля. Мастери объяснил, почему больше с ним не работает: "Вероятно, я требовал слишком многого! Не каждый в ансамбле был таким же перфекционистом, как я. И часто получалось, что за качество сыгрался главным образом один я. Проблема early music movement в том, что оно стало мейнстримом, музыканты перестали заниматься, изучать источники, думать о том, как они вместе звучат". Это действительно так?

Я бы не хотел комментировать подобные слова. (Смеется) Не думаю, что такие разговоры впрямую касаются музыки. Ты должен концентрироваться на собственной работе, делать музыку и как можно меньше вовлекаться в болтовню вокруг нее – мадо ли это что-то думать и говорить... Важнее всего прийти в зал, послушать музыкантов своими ушами и составить собственное мнение: кому-то нравится, кому-то нет, это в порядке вещей. Но пусть мнение будет твоим, а не чье-нибудь еще. С Минали мы записали альбом "Венеция" и оперу Виччи "Катон в Утике". "Тамерлан" Генделя, кажется, тоже под его управлением записан.

У вас большая дискография, хотя диски сегодня продаются все хуже. Зачем в наши дни выпускать CD?

Во-первых, все мои записи можно либо скачать, либо послушать через стриминговые сервисы. CD – для тех, кто еще не освоил эти возможности интернета. А таких немало. Но все это можно и скачать. Во-вторых, зачем, очень важно понимать, что нельзя отдавать самую малость. В интернете полно всяческого трюха и куда меньше чего-то действительно качественного. Никто не задумывается о том, чтобы планомерно понимать интернет серьезным контентом, инвестировать в это. То, чем я занимаюсь, так или иначе имеет международный резонанс, люди могут послушать меня где угодно, в Японии или Южной Африке. Во всем мире можно посмотреть и послушать, что мы тут делаем.

Делать новые записи – значит повышать процент качественного контента в интернете, в эпоху медиа, где угодно. Разумеется, это канва в море по сравнению с Gangnam Style или с чем-то в этом роде, что слушают миллиарды. И все-таки я верю в то, что могу сделать что-то важное для будущего, пусть даже и немного. И в то, что другие это могут. Делать культуру доступной посредством новых медиа – очень важно; музеи, оперные театры, концертные залы – все это по-прежнему очень закрытые институты. А мы должны быть гораздо более открыты и разделять наше искусство со всем миром.

Ваша дискография начиналась с Вивальди, Монтеверди, Генделя. Как возник ваш интерес к композиторам, которых мы до недавних пор знали хуже, таким как Поррора или Виччи? И как эти имена повнаучу воспринимала публики?

Когда я начинал записываться и работал над тем же Вивальди, это был ничуть не хитовый репертуар, его просто не знали: когда в 2009 году я работал над записью его оперы "Фарна", никто о ней не слышал. Теперь другое дело, этот репертуар стал популярным. Когда я выпустила оперу "Сирой" Хассе, мы получили запросы из Нидерландов, из Германии, из Австралии: там хотели ее исполнить, просили у нас ноты. То же и с оперой "Апраксина" Виччи. Мне хотелось заинтересовать людей музыкой, которой они не знали, внести разнообразие в тот репертуар, что исполняется обычно. Так или иначе, это получается, чему я счастлив. Для меня репертуарное открытие само по себе – не самоцель, тем более что из записанных нами редеостей что-то записывалось и прежде, целиком или фрагментами. Важно не просто выгнать на свет забытую партию, но и представить ее на высочайшем исполнительском уровне. В этом смысле я перфекционист, очень требователен к оркестрам, ко всем участникам процесса. И если каждый делает лучше, на что способен, результат получается весьма захватывающий, людям он нравится, и я этому счастлив. Что даст силы продолжать.

Прошлым летом вы дебютировали на Тронском фестивале в Зальцбурге...

Верно, и через год возвращаюсь туда для работы над новой оперной постановкой, чего очень жду. Это будет опера "Позифем" Поррора, я буду сам ее ставить и спую Улисса. Этим фестивалем руководит Чечиния Бартоли, мы много работаем вместе и делали там несколько совместных проектов, например, концертное исполнение оперы "Дездемона и Ромео" Дингарелли, где я занимался кастингом и сбором всей команды. Мы давние друзья.

Вы упомянули оперу "Сирой", где с вами пела российская певица Юлия Лекнева. Не скажете ли несколько слов о ней?

Работать с Юлией – одно удовольствие! Я очень счастлив, что мы тогда сделали вместе "Сирой" и с тех исполняем эту оперу вместе уже больше трех лет! Было около тридцати исполнений – спектакль, концертная версия, полусценическая... 18 мая мы выступаем вместе на открытии после ремонта Марграфского театра в Байройте, там представим как раз полусценическую версию, будем репетировать около недели. Роль Лаониче, которую Юлия исполняет в этой опере, – из ее лучших достижений на сцене. Юлия играет ее просто потрясающе, и роль ей идеально подходит. Жалко, что мы не смогли показать полноценную постановку в Москве, это незабываемое зрелище, и она как актриса в нем великолена. Юлия ведь не просто прекрасная концертная певица, она настоящее оперное существо, оарена всем, что для этого необходимо. Всегда рад работать с ней.



Фото: Ира Полярная

Концертные и полусценические исполнения опер сегодня так популярны, что часто их сравнивают с полноценными спектаклями не в пользу последних. Хорошее концертное исполнение может оказаться лучше неудачной постановки или нет?

Мне не по душе, когда опера выколупывается подобным образом. В нашем мире достаточно денег, времени и сил на то, чтобы поставить спектакль. Зритель часто предпочитает сказать просто "мне нравится" или "мне не нравится" вместо того, чтобы попытаться углубиться в интерпретацию исполнителя, понять ее. Цель искусства не только в том, чтобы развлекать, оно может заставить нас думать, в искусстве и конкретно в музыке это очень важно. Поэтому я, конечно, не соглашусь. Это очень похвально – говорить, что в концертном исполнении оперы выигрывают: они ведь создавались не для этого! А чтобы их ставили на сцене. И это намерение автора следует уважать, а не говорить о нем снисходительно, как часто делается.

Мы говорили на эту же тему с вашим коллегой Филиппом Жарусским вскоре после зальцбургской постановки "Юлия Цезаря в Египте" Генделя с нефтяными вышками, крылатыми ракетам и танком. "Я не пел эту оперу прежде, кроме как в концертном исполнении, и очень давно ждал возможности сыграть ее на сцене", – говорил он. С одной стороны, Филипп очень хвалил спектакль, с другой – критиковал некоторые детали, например, свой костюм или то, что по воле постановщика артисты должны были петь, засунув голову в пасть крокодила.

Я этой постановки не видел, комментировать не могу. Но на моем веку случались постановки, где я чувствовал себя неважно и не считал удачным то, что делал режиссер. Но это мое личное мнение, оно совершенно необязательно должно совпадать с мнением двух тысяч зрителей, которые смотрят спектакль! Участвуя в постановке, ты неизбежно видишь ее другими глазами, чем тот, кто смотрит из зала. Поэтому, если вы уже согласились работать с тем или иным режиссером, вы должны сказать себе, что сейчас ваше мнение не имеет значения. Иначе работа превратится в ад. Поэтому ваша задача – воплощать то, что задумал режиссер. А уже потом вы можете сказать, нравится вам постановка или нет. Но не во время работы. Если ты готов временно забыть о своем личном мнении, работать вам будет гораздо легче.

Как и вы, Филипп поет по преимуществу барочный репертуар, однако четыре года назад исполнил написанный для него диск "Сонеты Луизы Лабэ" нашего современника Марка-Андре Дельбана. У вас нет намерения заказать сочинение кому-либо из современных композиторов?

Не знаю, пока не думал об этом. Может быть, нет, может быть, да, как знать. Слишком много работы; проектов, связанных с барочной оперой, у меня сейчас выше головы. Петь не остается времени на себя: время от времени я мечтаю о трех неделях отпуска, но это невозможно. Представить себе, что я работаю над чем-то совершенно для меня новым, пока не могу, об этом даже подумать некогда.



Фото: Anna Hoffman

Вы говорили, что артист не должен спорить с режиссером. Каково петь в спектакле, который вы же сами и ставите?

Мне очень нравится, меня это очень освобождает. Кому-то, наверно, было бы трудно, мне же несколько, для меня это наслаждение. Месяц назад я как режиссер выпустил в Лозанне "Деву озер" Россини, где исполнил партию Малькольма. Моя следующая постановка – "Жесток" Генделя в Карлсруэ, затем "Позифем" Поррора в Зальцбурге, о чем мы уже говорили.

Что вы знаете и любите из русской музыки?

Мне особенно по душе Римский-Корсаков и композиторы его круга; в его музыке с невероятной выразительностью показана необходимость Центральной России – степи, горы, природа... романтическое чувство в этой музыке так сильно, что ты видишь все это. А само звучание музыки настолько наполнено мечтой, что ты как будто попадаешь в сказку! Простой дух захватывает. Это направление в русской музыке я очень люблю, конец XIX века – это мажор. Совершенно особенная музыка, ни на что больше не похожа.

[Опера Априори](#)

NEW RELEASES

By Francis Muzzu



NICOLA PORPORA: OPERA ARIAS

Max Emanuel Cencic

Decca 483 3235 – CD

★★★★

Should Nicola Porpora be watching over us, he must be delighted with the airing his music is getting these days, 250 years after his death. A new disc of *Porpora Arias*, featuring the Croatian countertenor **Max Emanuel Cencic**, is devoted entirely to the Neapolitan composer's music. There is a wealth of material to choose from (Porpora composed around 50 operas), and Cencic includes six world premieres here, conducted by George Petrou. Once again, although he is adept at the vocal firework displays, it's Cencic's smooth legato and sense of line that really impress. Porpora's music reveals a wealth of unusual orchestral colours, particularly in his writing for brass, revealed in the aria from *Poro*, which is particularly vivid.



PORPORA

Germanico in Germania

Max Emanuel Cencic (countertenor),
 Julia Lezhneva (mezzosopraan), Juió
 Sancho (tenor) e.a., Capella Cracovien-
 sis o.l.v. Jan Tomasz Adamus

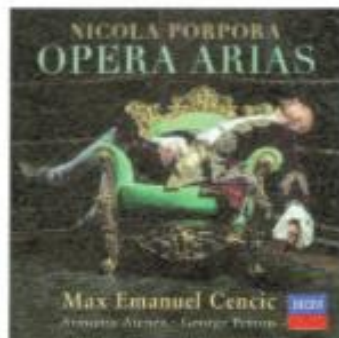
Decca 483 1523 • DDD-219'

(3 cd's)

Waardering: 8

Nicola Porpora's werk geniet tegenwoordig nauwelijks bekendheid, maar hij schreef bijna vijftig opera's. Bij vlagen worden afzonderlijke aria's afgestoft. Deze eerste opname van het rijkelijk barokke *Germanico in Germania* vormt een goede reden om er even voor te gaan zitten (krap vier uur!). De luisteraar wordt beloond, waarbij ik aantekenen dat deze opname qua helderheid en scherpheid beter had gekund, zeker nu Decca op dit vlak een naam hoog te houden heeft. Porpora was niet alleen componist, maar ook een vooraanstaande zangpedagoog. Zo bracht hij de beroemde castraat Carlo Farinelli de kneepjes van het vak bij. En hij zorgde er ook voor dat zijn muziek voldoende uitdaging bood aan de zanger. Cencic als primo uomo, *Germanico*, is een enorm sterke en wendbare countertenor. Wat een geluid! Sancho overtuigt als tenor zeer. En de nog heel jonge Lezhneva brengt met schijnbaar het grootste gemak prachtige coloratuur. Ook de al even jonge sopraan Dilyara Idrisova brengt een paar prachtige aria's tot leven, met haar 'duet' met de hoorns als hoogtepunt (nr 26 op cd 1).

Quirijn Bongaerts



Musik
★★★★★
Klang
★★★★★

Porpora: Opernarien; Max Emanuel Cencic, Armonia Atenea, George Petrou (2017); Decca

Bei der Hälfte der 14 Nummern dieser CD handelt es sich um Weltersteinspielungen. Schon dies bestätigt, was die Blicke in viele Lexika und Musik- oder Operngeschichten nahelegen: Nicola Antonio Porpora (1686-1768) ist immer noch Terra incognita, die wenigen vorhandenen Aufnahmen seiner Werke verdeutlichen es zusätzlich.

Vor knapp fünf Jahren hat Philippe Jaroussky ein Porpora-Album vorgelegt, Franco Fagioli folgte: Cencics Arien-sammlung hat mit Jaroussky keine und mit Fagioli nur ganz vereinzelte Überschneidungen. Auch enthält die vorliegende Zusammenstellung keine Arien aus der Oper „Germanico in Germania“, die ebenfalls dieser Tage bei Decca erscheint. Schon die erste Nummer startet fetzig, nach wenigen Sekunden ist der Hörer drin in dieser höchst virtuosen Musik, die ganz auf die Persönlichkeit des Sängers (Kastraten) zugeschnitten ist. Porpora hat u. a. intensiv mit Farinelli gearbeitet.

Als Meister der um keinen emotionalen Effekt verlegenen neapolitanischen Schule (wenngleich diese Schubladen immer haken) wusste er die Skalen der Gefühle und Tonlagen intensiv anzulegen, auf dass die männlichen Diven rauf- und runter stolzieren oder auch in Höchstgeschwindigkeit darüber eilen konnten. Cencic mit seiner wohl lautend fließenden Counterstimme nimmt all diese Einladungen gerne an, um sein Können und seine hohe Musikalität zu zeigen. Er hat Arien u. a. aus „Ezio“, „Carlo di Calvo“ und „Il trionfo di Camilla“ ausgewählt. Da die Texte im Beiheft (mehrsprachig) abgedruckt sind, kann man sich den Situationen der singenden Personen aus den Opernraritäten zumindest grundsätzlich nähern. Die Armonia Atenea mit George Petrou wirbelt mächtig, setzt starke Akzente und kräftige, aber auch gedeckte Farben und wird von der Aufnahmetechnik in Rast und Raserei erfreulich präsent gehalten.

Johannes Schmitz

Ein Krieger, der die Herzen rührt

Mehr als ein Gesangslehrer des Barocks: Der Countertenor Max Emanuel Cencic fördert die Brillanz des Komponisten Nicola Porpora mit der Oper „Germanico in Germania“ zutage.

Echte Virtuosität sei „nicht ein Auswuchs, sondern ein notwendiges Element der Musik“, hielt Franz Liszt jenen Kritikern entgegen, die in klaviertechnischer Akrobatik nur seelenloses Geklimper und zirkusmäßige, dem poetischen Wesen der Tonkunst fremde Effekthascherei sahen. Er musste es wissen, war er doch nicht nur einer der begnadetsten Tastenlöwen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, sondern auch ein genialer Komponist. Was damals vor allem für die Entwicklung der Pianistik und der Geigentechnik galt, traf im achtzehnten Jahrhundert ganz ähnlich für die Gesangskunst zu.

Die Stars des spätbarocken Musikbetriebs waren Stimmbandarten, die mit halbsprecherischen Koloraturen, spektakulären Intervallsprüngen und Trillern, phantasievoll improvisierten Fiorituren und Kadenzzen, aber auch mit ausgefeilter Atemtechnik und absoluter Kontrolle über Dynamik sämtlichen Emotionen vokal packend Ausdruck verleihen konnten. Berühmte Primadonnen wie Faustina Bordoni oder Francesca Cuzzoni, besonders aber legendäre Kastraten wie Farinelli, Senesino oder Caffarelli rissen ihr Publikum zu hysterischen Begeisterungstürmen hin.

Einer der gesuchtesten Gesangslehrer jener Zeit war Nicola Porpora. Aus seiner strengen Schule gingen die Kastraten Gaetano Majorano und Carlo Broschi hervor, die unter ihren Künstlernamen Caffarelli und Farinelli europaweit gefeiert wurden. Die Anekdote, Porpora habe Caffarelli im Unterricht sechs Jahre lang mit Stimmübungen gequält, die auf einem einzigen Blatt notiert waren, ist sicher übertrieben. Fraglos jedoch wurde damals die hohe Kunst vokaler Virtuosität in Verbindung mit musikdramatischer Expression auf ein vorher nicht vorstellbares und seither nie wieder erreichtes Niveau geführt.

Wie Liszt war Porpora auch ein bedeutender Tonsetzer. Mit seinen Opern zielte er keineswegs nur auf Überumpelung der Hörschaft durch geläufige Gurgeln, sondern nicht minder auf Rührung der Herzen. Seinen Schülern vermittelte er dazu auch musiktheoretische Kenntnisse. Geboren wurde er 1686 in Neapel und war somit ein Jahr jünger als Georg Friedrich Händel, dem er später in London als Opernkomponist und Impresario Konkurrenz machte. Gegen Ende seines Lebens gewährte er in Wien dem jungen Joseph Haydn, den er als Kammerdiener und musikalischen Assistenten angeheuert hatte, Unterricht und freies Wohnen. Vor zweihundertfünfzig Jahren starb er in seiner Heimatstadt.



Trilleroffensive im Boxing – das haut den stärksten Mann um: Max Emanuel Cencic auf dem Siegerthron

Foto Anna Hoffmann

Obwohl Porpora mit seinen rund fünfzig Opern ein halbes Jahrhundert lang international erfolgreich war, geriet er nach seinem Tod schnell in Vergessenheit. Dubiose Wertungen von Nachgeborenen, die seine Musik nie gehört hatten, wurden dann unbesehen als lexikalisches „Wissen“ verbreitet. Zum Jubiläumsjahr sind nun auf Betreiben des österreichischen Countertenors Max Emanuel Cencic gleich zwei Porpora-Einspielun-

gen erschienen, an denen der Sänger selbst mitgewirkt hat. Neben einem Arienalbum mit dem fabelhaften Ensemble Armonia Atenea unter der Leitung von George Petrou liegt auch die erste Gesamteinspielung der Oper „Germanico in Germania“ vor.

Die Wiederentdeckung des Stimmkunstzaubers aus Neapel hat sich indes schon länger angebahnt. Cencics Kollege Franco Fagioli nahm vor einigen Jahren

mit dem Dirigenten Alessandro de Marchi eine Arien-Kompilation auf. Zur selben Zeit brachte Philippe Jaroussky ein Porpora-Album heraus, das bei Duetten mit Cecilia Bartolis prominenter Unterstützung aufwartet. Das Heidelberger Theater präsentierte unlängst in Schwetzingen Porporas „Mitridate“ und bereits 2012 seine Oper „Polifemo“, die einst Händel mit ihrem Hit „Alto Giove“ den Rang abgelaufen hat. In Innsbruck folgte

2015 unter De Marchi die erste szenische Wiederaufführung des „Germanico“.

Die im Kontext dieser Produktion geplante Einspielung mit Cencic in der Titelrolle ist mittlerweile wegen Differenzen zwischen Beteiligten ohne ursprünglich vorgesehene Mitwirkung von Fagioli und ohne De Marchis Ensemble Accademia Montis Regalis zustande gekommen. Stattdessen wurde die von Jan Tomasz Adamus geleitete Capella Cracoviensis engagiert. Mit von der Partie sind außerdem die Sopranistinnen Dilyara Idrisova, Hasnaa Bennani und Mary-Ellen Nesi, der Tenor Juan Sancho und als weiblicher Star der Aufnahme Julia Lezhneva.

Bei der Uraufführung von Porporas „Germanico“ 1732 im kirchenstaatlichen Rom durften Frauenrollen nur männlich besetzt werden. Caffarelli übernahm die ihm auf der Stimme geschriebene Partie von Germanicos Gegenspieler Arminio, jenem Cheruskerfürst, der einige Jahre vor Beginn der Opernhandlung Varus' römische Legionen besiegte. Das anspruchsvolle Libretto von Niccolò Coluzzi entfaltet facettenreich den heute noch aktuellen Konflikt zwischen nationalem Unabhängigkeitsdrang auf der einen und imperialistischer Machtpolitik im Namen von Fortschritt, Zivilisation und Vernunft auf der anderen Seite.

Bei der Ersteinpielung sind Porporas reiche Arienvarianten, betörende Duette und ein herzerweichendes Terzett in besten Kehlen. Cencic dosiert Farbnuancen, Agogik und Dynamik vorbildlich im Dienst des Ausdrucks. Seine Verzierung sind stets aus dem Kontext begründet. Lezhneva reißt ihre Einzeltöne auch bei Hochgeschwindigkeit glasklar auf die Perlenschnur ihres Gesangs. In jedem Moment kontrolliert sie Atem, Intonation und Timbre. Emotionsgeladene Triller und originell gestaltete Kadenzzen gelangen mühelos. Mary-Ellen Nesi, Dilyara Idrisova, Hasnaa Bennani und Juan Sancho entfalten ein belcantistisches Feuerwerk der Gefühle und präsentieren Porpora als begnadeten Melodiker.

Leider lässt die „historisch“ musizierende Capella Cracoviensis bei der einleitenden Sinfonia Intonationsreinheit und Tempostabilität vermissen, findet aber bald zu solidem Niveau und beschwingtem Spiel. Störend wirken einige von Adamus verhetzt angegangene Arien. Insgesamt erweist sich Porporas Opera seria in drei Akten in ihrer genialen Verbindung von Dichtung und hochvirtuos-expressivem, von erlesenen Farbmischungen und originellen Harmoniewendungen grundiertem Gesang als eigenständiges Meisterwerk, das sich vor Händels Musikdramen nicht zu verstecken braucht.

WERNER M. GRIMMEL



Nicola Porpora: „Germanico in Germania“; Max Emanuel Cencic, Julia Lezhneva u. a., Capella Cracoviensis, Jan Tomasz Adamus. Decca 483 1523 (Universal)



Nicola Porpora: „Opera Arias“; Max Emanuel Cencic (Countertenor), Armonia Atenea, George Petrou. Decca 483 3235 (Universal)

Rivals: Max Emanuel Cenčić pits Porpora and Handel against each other in Halle

Von Sandra Bowdler, 09 Juni 2018

Max Emanuel Cenčić is now a musical household word, in Baroque circles anyway; conductor George Petrou and his orchestra Armonia Atenea are equally familiar. A recital featuring these artists was bound to be a popular and critical success. The title of the concert was "Rivalen", referring to the (supposed?) rivalry between the composers Nicola Porpora and George Frideric Handel, who were both in London in the early 1730s. Two halves of Porpora and Handel were interspersed with orchestral works by Vivaldi.



Max Emanuel Cenčić
© Anna Hoffmann

The small orchestra (strings, theorbo, harpsichord) began with Vivaldi's *Concerto for 2 violins, cello and strings*, RV522, with a crisp precise opening, a delicate rippling *Larghetto* and an emphatic, energetic *Allegro*, showing off the talents of violinists Sergiu Nastasa and Carmen-Otilia Alitei. The same team provided a dramatic Trio Sonata in D minor, RV 63, a version of "La Follia", and, in the second half, theorbist Theodoros Kitsos picked up a much tinier instrument for the Mandolin Concerto in C major, RV 425, beguiling the audience into applause after the first movement (to rather embarrassed laughter). They also, of course, provided splendid support for the singer throughout.

Cenčić appeared all in black, with a fabulous sequin-detailed jacket, and a minimum of splashy showmanship; his most overt reaction was a benign smile between arias. The first two arias derived from two of the operas Porpora composed for the London stage, *Ifigenia in Aulide* (1735) and *Arianna in Nasso* (1733). The first, "Tu spietato, non sarai" was an all-stops out bravura affair, sung with all-out uncovered tone, full bodied top notes, with spectacular cadenzas at the end of the A section and again at the end of the *da capo*. "Nume che reggi 'l mare" was a slower affair, sung with mostly straight tone and evident feeling. The other Porpora arias derived from earlier and later respectively in the composer's career. "Torbido intorno al core" from 1726's *Meride e Selinunte* was another slower piece, sung with rounded tone with sustained and lovely high notes, followed by "D'esser già parmi" (from *Filandro*, 1747), another bravura aria displaying Cenčić's flexibility and general vocal elegance.

After the interval, we had two arias from Handel's *Orlando* (1732), "Gia l'ebro mio ciglio", displaying a slight glitch in the opening note but settling into accurate heartfelt singing with beautiful violin and continuo accompaniment. Orlando's aria "Cielo! Se tu consenti", in which he is very cross with Angelica, was then sung with great enthusiasm and exciting cadenzas. Two energetic arias from *Arminio* concluded the printed program, "Al par della mis sorte" and "Si cadrò, ma sorgerà". An enthusiastic reception provoked two encores, an aria from Porpora's *Germanico in Germania* (1732) and one from *La clemenza di Tito* (1735) from Adolph Hasse, probably more of a rival to Porpora than Handel had been; Cenčić made the most of this dramatic music. Some folk sitting further back in this (somewhat difficult) venue had some issues with the volume. For most however it was a most exciting and satisfying evening's performance from all involved.

HÄNDEL-FESTSPIELE

Rivalen der musikalischen Rennbahn

Counter-Star Cencic begeistert in Halle.

VON JOACHIM LANGE

HALLE/MZ - Max Emanuel Cencic gehört nicht nur zu den führenden Countertenören unserer Zeit, er hat es auch sonst drauf. Führt mittlerweile selbst Regie, so wie beim Karlsruher „Arminio“ vor zwei Jahren, wo er zugleich die Titelpartie sang. Allein schon, dass der 1976 in Zagreb geborene Cencic im vorigen Jahr dort sein 35-jähriges Bühnenjubiläum feierte, spricht für sich. Er ist nicht erst als Counter an die Spitze seiner Zunft durchgestartet, sondern war schon davor als Sopran eine Klasse für sich.

Bei den Festspielen steuerte Cencic in der Konzerthalle Ulrichskirche am Freitag das letzte der Konzertschmuckstücke bei. Zusammen mit den Instrumentalisten von Armonia Atenea unter Leitung von George Petrou. Beim Applaus für Cencic schien es manchmal so, als hätte der Grieche den Titel des Konzerts „Rivalen“ auf sich bezogen. Dabei hatten seine Musiker und er mit zwei schwungvollen Vivaldi-Konzerten und einer Sonate des Italieners reichlich Gelegenheit, allein zu glänzen.

Der Titel meinte natürlich Rivalitäten in der Händelzeit. Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) war in Venedig meilenweit von Händels Londoner Opernunternehmen entfernt. Anders

ternehmen entfernt. Anders der auch als Kastraten-Coach berühmte Nicola Antonio Por-



In der Ulrichskirche: Max Emanuel Cencic

FOTO: HÄNDEL FESTSPIELE

pora (1686-1768). Der rückte „unserem“ Maestro 1733 in London auf die Pelle und konkurrierte mit seiner Adels-Oper unmittelbar mit ihm.

Das ist nur von heute aus betrachtet amüsant. Dass da ein zweiter begnadeter Melodienerfinder und Meister der Gurgelbravour am Werke war, machen die vier zwischen Gefühl und Temperamentsausbruch wechselnden Stücke von Porpora vor der Pause deutlich. Cencic beeindruckte dabei mit seiner technischen Versiertheit, dem gereiften Timbre und seinem Drang zum Gestalten. Dem setzte er dann (wieder im klugen Temperamentswechsel) Händel-Arien aus dessen „Orlando“ und „Arminio“ entgegen.

Bei den Zugaben beschränkte er sich auf eine Arie aus Porporas „Germanico in Germania“, um dann abschließend nochmal mit einer Arie aus „La clemenza di Tito“ von Johann Adolph Hasse den Furore aufblitzen zu lassen, den man an dieser Stelle auch gerne Händel gegönnt hätte.