



Riccardo Stracciari

in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*



This release is the first of two which will present both of the complete opera recordings of baritone Riccardo Stracciari. Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* was recorded in 1929, and Verdi's *Rigoletto*, with the same principal cast members and conductor, followed the next year. Despite their importance, these sets have never received satisfactory new transfers during the CD era, with the last "official" transfer of *Il barbiere* from EMI having been made as long ago as 1955 (reissued from those tapes for a 1979 LP edition).

Riccardo Stracciari (1875 - 1955) was born near Bologna and made his professional debut there in 1899. He first sang at La Scala in 1904, and his international career began the following year with appearances at Covent Garden in 1905 and the Metropolitan Opera in 1906. He sang widely throughout Europe and the Americas before retiring in 1944. He was best known for his portrayal of Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, which he reportedly sang 1000 times, and for *Rigoletto*. No less an authority than Rosa Ponselle admired his singing, and he is still considered one of the finest Italian baritones of his era.

Coloratura Mercedes Capsir (1895 - 1969) was born in Barcelona and made her debut in 1913 as Gilda in *Rigoletto*. Her Italian debut was as Rosina in *Il barbiere*, and she first appeared at La Scala in 1924. In addition to her two recordings with Stracciari, she also recorded *La Traviata* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* under Molajoli. She retired from performing in 1949.

Florence-born lyric *tenore di grazie* Dino Borgioli (1891 - 1960) was most associated with Mozart and the bel canto roles of Rossini and Donizetti. He made his debut in 1914, first sang at La Scala in 1918, toured Australia with Melba in 1924, and appeared at Covent Garden the following year and, during the 1930s, at the Glyndebourne Festival. He also sang in Paris, Salzburg, San Francisco, Chicago and at the Metropolitan. Following his performing career, he taught in London.

Little is known about conductor Lorenzo Molajoli (1868 - 1939) - so little, in fact, that until recently, it was thought by some that he was another conductor working under a *nom de disque* for contractual purposes. His early career was spent conducting in the Americas, South Africa and provincial Italian theatres. In 1926, he became Italian Columbia's house conductor, under which guise he recorded twenty complete or abridged operas between 1928 and 1932. His tight control of the ensemble (credited on the labels as the "Milan Symphony Orchestra", but in reality the La Scala forces) and fast tempi often produced dramatic and exciting performances.

Even listeners without perfect pitch will note that the piano used to accompany the recitatives in this recording was tuned much lower than the orchestra, leading to some jarring transitions. I have chosen to leave these differences as they were, so as not to falsify the original recording. Likewise, I decided not to add artificial reverberation to the very dry acoustic of the small studio in which the recording was made, so as not to muffle the rapid-fire delivery of the recitatives.

Some textual issues require comment. In the "Lesson Scene", Capsir sings an adaptation she made of Mozart's 12 *Variations on "Je suis Lindor"*, K354, which itself had been based on a theme composed by Antoine-Laurent Baudron for Beaumarchais' *Le Barbiere de Séville*, thus bringing it full circle, as it were. The aria sung by Bartolo in Scene 2 of Act 1, "Manca un foglio", was written by Pietro Romani for an 1816 Florence production as a substitute for Rossini's original, "A un dottor della mia sorte," which presented some vocal difficulties. Romani's interpolation became accepted as canon over the years; but for this reissue, I have let Baccaloni have the last word by appending his 1941 recording of the Rossini original.

Mark Obert-Thorn



rossini

il barbiere di sivilgia

disc one

1. Overture (6:50)

Act 1, Scene 1

2. Piano, pianissimo (3:06)
3. Ecco, ridente in cielo (5:27)
4. Mille grazie, mio signore (2:19)
5. Largo al factotum (7:32)
6. Se il mio nome saper voi bramate (4:30)
7. All'idea di quel metallo (7:43)

Act 1, Scene 2

8. Una voce poco fa (11:00)
9. La calunnia è un venticello (6:19)
10. Dunque io son (6:12)
11. Manca un foglio (3:52)

CAST

Riccardo Stracciari baritone (Figaro); Mercedes Capsir soprano (Rosina); Dino Borgioli tenor (Il Conte d'Almaviva); Salvatore Baccaloni bass (Bartolo); Vincenzo Bettoni bass (Basilio); Cesira Ferrari soprano (Berta); Attilio Bordonali baritone (Fiorello); Aristide Baracchi bass (An Officer)

Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan
(Vittore Veneziani, chorus master)
Lorenzo Molajoli, conductor

disc two

1. Finora in questa camera (0:30)
2. Ehi, di casa, buona gente (7:33)
3. Che cosa accadde, signori miei (4:00)
4. Fredda ed immobile (2:58)
5. Ma signor . . . ma un dottor (4:25)

Act 2

6. Ma vedi il mio destino! (0:33)
7. Pace e gioia sia con voi (3:50)
8. Un verde praticel pien di bei fiori (4:25)
9. Quando mi sei vicina (3:27)
10. Don Basilio! . . . Cosa veggo! (4:08)
11. Buona sera, mio signore (5:33)
12. Il vecchiotto cerca moglie (2:39)
13. Temporale (3:59)
14. Ah, qual colpo inaspettato! (7:13)
15. Di sì felice innesto (1:13)

Recorded 21 November 1927 (Overture) & 24 June – 5 July 1929 in Milan
Matrix nos.: WBX 204/5 (Overture) and WBX 605/8, 610/7 & 620/36
First issued on Italian Columbia D 14564/79

Appendix

16. A un dottor della mia sorte (4:32)

Salvatore Baccaloni bass

Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf

Recorded 6 February 1941 in Liederkrantz Hall, New York City
Matrix: XCO 29731 · First issued on American Columbia 71193-D

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: **Mark Obert-Thorn**

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Total duration: 2hr 5:49