

Riccardo Stracciari

in Verdi's Rigoletto

[A]nyone who wants to hear one of the greatest Verdian baritones ever, who had already made his debut when Verdi was still alive, will be rewarded. Stracciari's co-singers are distinguished: refined, bright, but powerful lyric tenor Dino Borgioli and brilliant Spanish coloratura soprano Mercedes Capsir, who specialised in roles such as Gilda. The rest of the cast are Milanese regulars and uniformly fine [...]

Stracciari had an especially rich, sonorous quality to his baritone – it really was a unique, miraculous sound of extraordinary resonance; no other Rigoletto except Titta Ruffo approaches its depth and power. He was already a veteran performer in his early fifties here, having sung professionally for thirty years but the voice is still in marvelous condition and he uses the text so expressively. Sadly, the only other complete recording he made (in 1929 with the same two co-singers and conductor as here) was of his other signature role, Figaro, which he sang over a thousand times.

What little we know about Molajoli is through the excellence of the recordings he made for Columbia; everything about his conducting is right here. You will not hear a better assumption of the eponymous leading role and he is more than adequately partnered.

Ralph Moore, Verdi's Rigoletto – A Discographical Conspectus (MusicWeb International, July, 2019)

The present release is a follow-up to our earlier, critically-acclaimed reissue of Stracciari's *Barber of Seville* (PACO 161), the baritone's only other complete opera recording. Despite their importance, these sets have never received satisfactory new transfers during the CD era, with the last "official" transfer of *Rigoletto* from EMI having been made as long ago as 1954 (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 and fast tempi often produced dramatic and exciting performances.

Mark Obert-Thorn



verdi

rigoletto

disc one

Act 1, Scene 1

1. Prelude (2:24)
2. Della mia bella incognita borghese (1:43)
3. Questa o quella (4:43)
4. Gran nuova! gran nuova! (2:36)
5. Ch'io gli parli (4:08)

Act 1, Scene 2

6. Quel vecchio maledivami! (4:04)
7. Pari siamo! (3:47)
8. Figlia! . . . Mio padre! (7:25)
9. Ah! veglia, o donna (1:53)
10. Giovanna, ho dei rimorsi (2:45)
11. È il sol dell'anima (5:10)
12. Gualtier Maldè . . . Caro nome (6:22)
13. Riedo! perchè? (2:11)
14. Zitti, zitti (3:01)

CAST

Riccardo Stracciari *baritone* (Rigoletto); Mercedes Capsir *soprano* (Gilda); Dino Borgioioli *tenor* (Duke of Mantua); Ernesto Dominici *bass* (Sparafucile); Anna Masetti Bassi *contralto* (Maddalena); Duilio Baronti *baritone* (Monterone); Ida Mannarini *mezzo-soprano* (Countess Ceprano, Giovanna); Aristide Baracchi *baritone* (Marullo); Guido Uxa *tenor* (Borsa); Eugenio Dall'Argine *bass* (Count Ceprano); Anna Novi *mezzo-soprano* (Page)

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

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Cover artwork based on a photograph of Riccardo Stracciari as Rigoletto

Total duration: 1hr 49:17 CD1: 52:12 CD2: 57:05

disc two

Act 2

1. Ella mi fu rapita! . . . Parmi veder (5:29)
2. Duca, Duca! (2:03)
3. Povero Rigoletto (3:14)
4. Cortigiani, vil razza dannata (4:16)
5. Mio padre! (1:52)
6. Tutte le feste (8:01)
7. No, vecchio t'inganni . . . Sì, vendetta (2:33)

Act 3

8. E l'ami? (1:48)
9. La donna è mobile (3:10)
10. Un dì, se ben rammentomi (1:39)
11. Bella figlia dell'amore (4:30)
12. Venti scudi (3:41)
13. È amabile in vero (5:58)
14. Della vendetta (4:11)
15. Chi è mai? (2:52)
16. Lassù in cielo (1:48)

Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan

(Vittore Veneziani, chorus master)

Lorenzo Molajoli, conductor

Recorded 22 August 1927 (Pari siamo) & 17 – 27 May 1930 in Milan
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