

PRIMA
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La Traviata

Full Opera by Giuseppe Verdi

Prima Classic

PRIMA003 - UPC 850000325050

Release on November 1st, 2019



A new studio recording of Verdi's *La Traviata* is to be released by Prima Classic, soprano Marina Rebeka's own label. Believed to be the first complete recording of the opera for 26 years not based on an existing production, it is certainly unprecedented for a small independent label to take on such a massive project so early in its existence. This studio recording, released on 1 November, is only Prima Classic's third release and its first full opera.

The stellar cast for *La Traviata* is headed by Marina Rebeka as Violetta, Charles Castronovo as Alfredo, and George Petean as Germont, along with the recently formed Latvian Festival Orchestra and the world-renowned State Choir Latvija under the baton of Michael Balke.

La Traviata is one of the top three most famous and performed operas worldwide, and Marina Rebeka has been singing the role of Violetta to great acclaim almost every season since 2007. She has performed the role in seventeen different productions of *La Traviata*, singing in houses such as Teatro alla Scala in Milan, The Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in London, Opéra National de Paris, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, and the Hamburg State Opera, among many others in Europe, Asia, and the USA.

This ambitious project involved musicians from Latvia, Romania, Spain, Germany, the USA, and Russia. The newly-formed Latvian Festival Orchestra is made up of the best players chosen from several Latvian chamber and symphony orchestras. The VAK State Choir Latvija is widely known the world over for upholding the high standards of the great Baltic choral tradition. The three leading singers – Marina Rebeka, Charles Castronovo, and George Petean – are also cast in the upcoming *La Traviata* production, conducted by Zubin Mehta, at La Scala, Milan in 2020.

The full opera, in its uncut version, was recorded specifically for this album, meaning that it is not a live performance that has been put onto disc, as is usually the case with most opera recordings nowadays. The closed-doors recording took place at the picturesque and iconic Great Guild Concert Hall in Riga, Latvia, between 24 March and 3 April 2019. Recorded using some of today's most advanced audio technology, the set aims to shed fresh light on *La Traviata*. "We hope it will become the current times' chapter in the long line of great recordings of this timeless masterpiece," says executive producer Edgardo Vertanessian.



Marina Rebeka, soprano

Latvian soprano Marina Rebeka is one of the leading opera singers of our time. She has gained a wide reputation as one of the greatest Verdi, Rossini, and Mozart singers in the world.

Since her international breakthrough at the Salzburg Festival in 2009 under the baton of Riccardo Muti, Rebeka has been a regular guest at the world's most prestigious concert halls and opera houses, such as the Teatro alla Scala (Milan), the Opéra National de Paris, the Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall (New York), the Royal Opera House Covent Garden (London), the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), the Bavarian State Opera (Munich), the Vienna State Opera and the Musikverein (Vienna), and the Zurich Opera House, among others.

She collaborates with leading conductors such as Riccardo Muti, Zubin Mehta, Antonio Pappano, Valery Gergiev, Fabio Luisi, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Daniele Gatti, Marco Armiliato, Thomas Hengelbrock, Paolo Carignani, Myung-whun Chung, Kent Nagano, Ottavio Dantone, and Dan Ettinger. The variety of her repertoire is outstanding and

ranges from Baroque (Händel), bel canto (Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti), and Verdi (*La Traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Il Trovatore*) to Tchaikovsky (*Eugene Onegin*) and Britten (*War Requiem*).

Born in Riga, Rebeka began her musical studies in Latvia and continued in Italy, where she graduated from the Conservatorio di Musica Santa Cecilia in Rome (2007). During her studies she also attended the Mozarteum International Summer Academy in Salzburg and the Rossini Academy in Pesaro. In the 2017/18 season, she was named the first-ever artist in residence by the Münchner Rundfunkorchester. In December 2016, Rebeka was granted the Order of the Three Stars, the highest award of the Republic of Latvia, for her cultural achievements. www.marinarebeka.com

Charles Castronovo, tenor

Acclaimed internationally as one of the finest lyric tenors of his generation, Charles Castronovo has sung at most of the world's leading opera houses, including the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the Berlin State Opera, the Vienna State Opera, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, the San Francisco Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago.



Castronovo's vast repertoire includes roles from the Baroque era (Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Gluck's *Alceste*), Mozart (*Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *La Clémence di Tito*), bel canto (Cherubini's *Médée*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Pasquale*, *Roberto Devereux*), French composers (Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* and *Faust*, Massenet's *Manon* and *Werther*, Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Bizet's *Carmen* and *Les pêcheurs de perles*, Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*), Verdi (*Falstaff*, *La Traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Rigoletto*, *I Masnadieri*, *Don Carlo*), Puccini (*La Rondine*, *La Bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*), verismo (Boito's *Mefistofele*), and Russian opera repertoire (Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* and Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*). He performed the title role of Mario Ruoppolo in Daniel Catán's *Il Postino* at the work's world premiere with the Los Angeles Opera, opposite Plácido Domingo. www.charlescastronovo.com



George Petean, baritone

One of the most sought after Verdian baritones of our time, George Petean appears regularly at the major opera houses in the world, such as the Vienna State Opera, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Zurich Opera House, the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, the Bavarian State Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Semperoper Dresden, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Teatro alla Scala, the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, and others.

Petean studied piano, trombone, and singing at the Gheorghe Dima Music Academy in his native town of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. After graduation, he continued to study singing with Vicente Sardinero and Giorgio Zancanaro. His professional stage debut occurred in 1997 at the Romanian National Opera in Timișoara in the title role of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. In 1999, he won the Grand Prix at the Hariclea Darclee

International Voice Competition in Romania and soon after made his international debut as Marcello in Puccini's *La Bohème* at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome.

Petean's repertoire is mainly based on Giuseppe Verdi's works, but it also includes roles from Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Bellini's *I Puritani* and *Il Pirata*, Puccini's *La Bohème* and *Madama Butterfly*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, and Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*. A truly Verdian baritone, he was Riccardo Muti's *Simon Boccanegra* for the 2012/13 season opening at Teatro dell'Opera in Rome as well as Riccardo Chailly's Ezio in Verdi's *Attila* at the Teatro alla Scala for the 2018/19 season opening.



Michael Balke, conductor

Equally at home in the symphonic and opera repertoire, the young German conductor Michael Balke is quickly gaining international attention for his performances. He regularly accepts invitations to many European countries as well as Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States. Balke was born in Braunschweig and received a full scholarship for his musical education at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, where he studied piano with James Tocco, conducting with Christopher Zimmerman, and chamber music with the Tokyo String Quartet, the LaSalle Quartet, and Menahem Pressler.

Balke lived in Italy from 2007 to 2011, where he assisted Riccardo Frizza at the Maggio Musicale in Florence and in Verona. In 2011 he became the principal conductor of the Magdeburg Opera, where he conducted a broad repertoire of new productions from Mozart, Rossini, and Donizetti to Verdi, Stravinsky, Korngold, and Richard Strauss as well as numerous symphony concerts. Highlights of this period include *Der Rosenkavalier* and a new production of Richard Strauss' *Elektra*.

At the same time, Balke accepted international invitations as a guest conductor: Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* at the Teatro Grande in Brescia and in Como, Cremona, and Pavia; *Hänsel und Gretel* at the Staatstheater Kassel; *La Traviata* at the Nationaltheater Mannheim; *La Bohème* at the Danish National Opera; and *L'Heure Espagnole / Gianni Schicchi* for the 2016 season opening at the Opéra National de Lorraine in Nancy.

Balke regularly collaborates with singers such as Ludovic Tézier, Lawrence Brownlee, Ian Bostridge, and Marina Rebeka, with whom he gave concerts in Zagreb with the Croatian Radio Orchestra, in Munich with the Munich Radio Orchestra, and at the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow. Balke was recently named principal guest conductor of the St. Gallen Theater and Symphony Orchestra (Switzerland), starting his tenure in the 2018/19 season. www.michaelbalke.com

Latvian Festival Orchestra

The Latvian Festival Orchestra (LFO) is a new organization that comprises a select group of musicians from various Latvian symphony and chamber orchestras. LFO's first performance took place in late 2015, together with soprano Marina Rebeka and Italian conductor Speranza Scappucci as part of the concert series for the inauguration of Great Amber, a new concert hall in the Latvian city of Liepāja.

In 2017, LFO and American conductor John Fiore toured in Latvia performing the concert version of Gaetano Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* in the country's largest concert halls, with Rebeka in the title role. In the summer of that same year, they played Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* with Karel Mark Chichon on the podium. The concert was honoured with the 2017 Liepāja Culture Award as well as the 2017 Kilogram of Culture award presented by Latvian public television and radio for the most significant musical performance of the year.

In 2017 and 2018, LFO performed at the Dzintari Concert Hall with Elīna Garanča and other outstanding musicians; these concerts were also conducted by Chichon, now an important partner of the Latvian Festival Orchestra. In 2018, LFO performed at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow and at the "Šalc" classical music festival in Liepāja, Ventspils, and Cēsis along with Rebeka and the young Latvian conductor Guntis Kuzma. www.labamuzika.lv



State Choir Latvija

The State Choir Latvija is one of the brightest stars on the Latvian cultural scene. Its musical radiance – complete with a warm, refined, and perfect vocal instrumentation and the unique sound of the Latvian choral tradition – is renowned worldwide. As the largest professional choir in the Baltic states, it regularly performs with some of the world's most prominent conductors and orchestras. The vocal skill of the 52 to 80 members makes the choir a powerful instrument capable of expressing many musical textures, from subtle *a cappella* pieces to grand vocal symphonies accompanied by a triple orchestra.

The choir has collaborated with bodies such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Bavarian Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Gustav Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Over the course of the choir's history, it has performed under conductors Mariss Jansons, Andris Nelsons, Neeme Järvi, Paavo Järvi, Vladimir Ashkenazy, David Zinman, Valery Gergiev, Zubin Mehta, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Tõnu Kaljuste, and many others. www.koris.lv

Credits

Conductor - Michael Balke
Latvian Festival Orchestra
State Choir Latvija

Violetta Valéry - Marina Rebeka
Alfredo Germont - Charles Castronovo
Giorgio Germont - George Petean
Flora Bervoix - Elisabeth Sergeeva
Gastone de Letorières - Gideon Poppe
Marchese d'Obigny - Isaac Galán
Barone Douphol - Rihards Mačanovskis
Dottore Grenvil - Krišjānis Norvelis
Annina - Laura Grecka
Giuseppe, domestico di Flora - Michails Čulpajevs
Commissionario - Luca Martoni

Produced by Sophie Raynaud and Marina Rebeka
Executive Producers: Edgardo Vertanessian and Marina Rebeka
Recording, Editing, Mixing, and Mastering: Edgardo Vertanessian
Recording Assistant: Joe Harling
Recorded at the Great Guild in Riga, Latvia, 24 March – 3 April 2019
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George Petean: Florina Petean
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