

*Opera
Rara*

50
YEARS

NEW ERA – NEW DISCOVERIES

BE PART OF A GLOBAL COMMUNITY
THAT CREATES A LEGACY OF RARE AND
GLORIOUS OPERATIC WORK

OPERA RARA: NEW ERA - NEW DISCOVERIES

REDISCOVERING, RESTORING, RECORDING AND PERFORMING
THE FORGOTTEN OPERATIC HERITAGE OF THE
19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES



Opera Rara is a world-leading, unique and award-winning combination of opera company, recording label and live operatic archaeologist. We search for neglected operatic masterpieces and restore them brilliantly and thrillingly to life for contemporary audiences worldwide to enjoy. Working with the best singers, conductors, orchestras and musicologists, we are at the cutting edge of the opera world, leading the expansion of the repertoire and encouraging our partner companies across the whole opera community to explore new and unknown operatic jewels.

2020 will be Opera Rara's fiftieth anniversary, and marks half a century of ground-breaking work bringing great unknown opera to a worldwide public. In 2019 our re-evaluation of **Rossini's *Semiramide* achieved an unprecedented double, winning Best Recording at the International Opera Awards and Best Opera Recording in the International Classical Music Awards.** Our new exclusive global distribution partnership with Warner Classics, one of the largest music distributors in the world, means that Opera Rara's work is set to reach an expanded audience of opera lovers.

We start this new era in our history from a position of artistic strength. **Since 1970, Opera Rara has made over 100 recordings of rare and neglected masterpieces**, and nearly half of those have been in brand new performing editions curated and researched by world renowned musicologists. As one of the handful of arts organisations **still making complete studio recordings**, we sell to a worldwide market of opera lovers and **have sold well over half a million**

copies both in physical and digital formats. Although only a fraction the size of most opera houses and most classical recording labels, we have been nominated every year in the history of the International Opera Awards, winning the prize for best recording on three occasions. Sir Mark Elder's tenure as Artistic Director over the past seven years has given us a platform for artistic excellence which is set to grow under **Carlo Rizzi's new artistic leadership**. Our plans are ambitious, innovative and unique. We are a charity that does not receive public funding. We need your help to make them happen.

"A superb triumph for Opera Rara, a label whose championship of (often neglected) operas – by brilliant performers and in studio conditions – can't be commended highly enough."

Gramophone Magazine on *Semiramide* (2017)

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Recordings:

- 72 full-length opera recordings (27 by Donizetti and 10 by Rossini)
- 57 artist collections and compilations
- 43 new performing editions
- Over 520,000 CDs and downloads sold

Recent Awards:

- Six nominations for Best Recording at the International Opera Awards: won three times, for *Fantasio* (2015), *Les Martyrs* (2017) and, most recently, *Semiramide* (2019)
- Nominated for Best Opera Recording for *Semiramide* in the 2019 BBC Music Magazine
- Winner of Best Opera Recording for *Semiramide* in the 2019 International Classical Music Awards

Donizetti: *Il Paria*, new critical edition conducted by Sir Mark Elder with Britten Sinfonia; studio recording and Barbican concert, 8 June 2019. Albina Shagimuratova, René Barbera, Misha Kiria, Marko Mimica, Kathryn Rudge, Thomas Atkins. Released in Spring 2020.



June 2019

Ermonela Jaho, solo recital, conducted by Maurizio Benini, Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana; studio recording, November 2019. Released in September 2020.



November 2019 / February 2020

Donizetti: *Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo*, new critical edition with additional unknown pieces, conducted by Carlo Rizzi with Britten Sinfonia; studio recording and Barbican concert, 22 June 2020. Released in March 2021.



June 2020

TIMELINE

2022



Verdi: *Simon Boccanegra* in the original 1857 version, conducted by Sir Mark Elder; studio recording and concert, 2022. Released in March 2023.

Autumn 2021



Leoncavallo: *Zingari*, conducted by Carlo Rizzi; studio recording and concert, Autumn 2021. Released in September 2022.

June 2021



Halévy: *Guido et Ginévra*, new critical edition, conducted by Carlo Rizzi, with Michael Spyres; studio recording and concert, June 2021. Released in March 2022.

November 2020



Offenbach: *La Princesse de Trébizonde*, conducted by Carlo Rizzi; studio recording and concert, November/December 2020. Released in September 2021.

OPERA RARA: THE FUTURE

Carlo Rizzi, Artistic Director
Henry Little, Chief Executive
Roger Parker, Artistic Dramaturg



In the last five and more years, Opera Rara has taken decisive steps into exciting new territory. Previously, we were seen primarily as a company that specialised in the forgotten works of early nineteenth-century Italian opera. But in recent years we have set out on a much more ambitious course, one in which we have produced award-winning recordings in four very different areas. The first of these, which remains at the heart of our endeavours, is the **Italian bel canto** repertory, in which Opera Rara has been such a consistent artistic leader for the last fifty years. The second is to explore the unjustly forgotten operas of the **Italian verismo** period, a time in which the dominance of Puccini left many other stunning works unjustly neglected. The third is a sustained commitment to the undiscovered works of that great comic genius of the Second Empire, **Jacques Offenbach**. Our fourth area is **French nineteenth-century Grand Opera**, in which the sheer variety of startlingly good but still unknown works is perhaps greater even than in the Italian repertory.

In view of our recent successes in this critical expansion of our repertoire, we have for the coming years planned an extraordinarily bold new programme, the most ambitious in Opera Rara's history. It will see decisive new additions to each of our four specialist areas.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY BEL CANTO

In the field of bel canto our first project (June 2019) is the first ever studio recording of Donizetti's *Il Paria (The Outcast)*, performed in a new critical edition. First staged in 1829, this work sees Donizetti experimenting for the first time with an exotic setting (sixteenth-century India), an ambience that inspired him to new levels of orchestral and choral complexity. In addition the opera boasts three of Donizetti's finest roles, including as the Romantic lead a stratospheric tenor written for the legendary voice of Giovanni Battista Rubini. This is the last recording under Sir Mark Elder's artistic direction, and sees us work for the first time with the acclaimed chamber orchestra Britten Sinfonia. Albina Shagimuratova, who sang the title role in our *Semiramide*, heads a cast including tenor René Barbera, Georgian baritone Misha Kiria and Croatian bass Marko Mimica, all making their debuts with us. A concert performance on 8 June at London's Barbican Centre introduced this unjustly neglected masterpiece to today's audiences; the studio recording will be released in Spring 2020.

Waiting impatiently in the wings are two further bel canto titles. **The first is yet another forgotten Donizetti gem, *Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo* (1833)**, an opera in the semiseria genre and with an exotic ambience that features one of the composer's greatest baritone roles. This will be Carlo Rizzi's first project as our Artistic Director and will be his first complete opera studio recording for Opera Rara. Planned for June 2020, with a concert at the Barbican, the project will see us renew our partnership with Britten Sinfonia; the cast will be announced shortly. And then in 2022 Sir Mark will return to Opera Rara to lead a **studio recording and concert of the original 1857 version of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra***. Much as our 2016 recording of *Semiramide* was a new interpretation of a well known title, Verdi's original *Boccanegra* is substantially different from the later version of the opera, with a consistency of style that makes the drama peculiarly compelling.

Thomas Atkins, Kathryn Rudge, Marko Mimica, Misha Kiria, René Barbera and Albina Shagimuratova performing Donizetti's *Il Paria* at the Barbican in June 2019



EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY VERISMO

In our next excavation of the verismo repertory (autumn 2019), we continue our series of solo recital discs with core member of the Opera Rara artistic “family” Ermonela Jaho. This famed soprano starred in our much-praised release of Leoncavallo’s *Zazà* (2016) and sings the role of Anna in our recent recording of *Le Willis* – our rediscovery of the original version of Puccini’s first opera. Her recital disc, released in September 2020, is similar in format to our recent critically acclaimed recitals *Écho* and *Espoir* (featuring Opera Rara artists Joyce El-Khoury and Michael Spyres): it will explore in depth the repertory of an important singer of the past, Rosina Storchio, the first Madama Butterfly and a soprano of enormous importance to the verismo school. The disc will include some of Storchio’s most famous roles (Butterfly and Verdi’s *Violetta*) but will also give us the chance to hear some fascinating forgotten works created by her, including Mascagni’s *Lodoletta* (1917).



Rosina Storchio: famed soprano of verismo opera

The recording sessions (November 2019 in Valencia) are led by the distinguished Italian conductor Maurizio Benini. They will also launch a new partnership for Opera Rara with the acclaimed Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana. Echoing the series of Salon Recitals conceived and curated by Opera Rara’s founder Patric Schmid, Ermonela will sing her first solo recital at London’s Wigmore Hall (February 2020). This features a selection of Storchio’s operatic repertoire as well as an exploration of the salon pieces of the period, including rare but beautiful songs by Bellini, Verdi, Toscanini and Tosti.

Our exploration of verismo will continue with the unveiling of Leoncavallo’s one-act opera *Zingari* (Gypsies), premiered in London in 1912 and (after *Pagliacci*) the most popular Leoncavallo opera for many decades. Those who revel in the direct emotional appeal of the composer’s most famous opera will find in *Zingari* a worthy successor, with three warring principals singing out their anguish in an hour of steamy passion, jealousy and despair. Planned for the autumn of 2021, under Carlo Rizzi’s leadership, this project will mark a new UK partnership for Opera Rara, one that we hope to announce in the spring of next year.

FRENCH OPERETTA

In the three years from autumn 2021, we want to resume exploration of the extraordinary output of Jacques Offenbach, with a continued emphasis on the more substantial, serious works the composer wrote towards the end of his career. Following the award-winning resurrection of *Fantasio* in 2014 (since performed several times in major European houses), **we will record and perform *La Princesse de Trébizonde***, premiered in 1869 at Baden-Baden and staged successfully in many of the world’s major operatic centres during the following decades.



Poster of first performance of Offenbach's *La Princesse de Trébizonde*

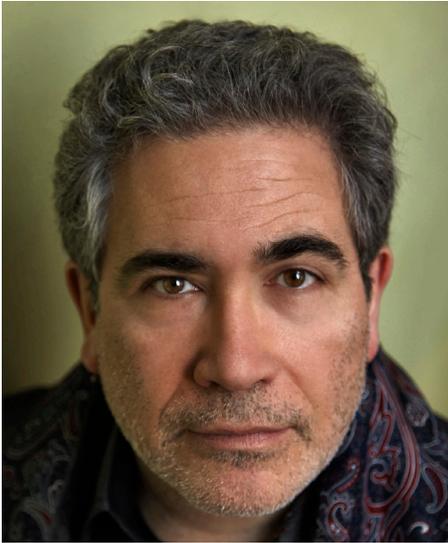
NINETEENTH-CENTURY GRAND OPERA

Our programme will also see the unveiling of three further forgotten gems from the French nineteenth-century repertory. The first, **planned for the summer of 2021, will involve a major piece of operatic archaeology even by Opera Rara's standards. This is Fromental Halévy's magnificent Grand Opera, the hyper-dramatic *Guido et Ginévro***, premiered to great acclaim at the Paris Opéra in 1838, praised as a masterpiece even by such a fastidious critic as Hector Berlioz, but then falling into unjust obscurity. Until Michael Spyres recorded two astonishing excerpts on his Opera Rara disc *Espoir* (conducted by Carlo Rizzi), no part of the work had been performed in modern times. Its musical and dramatic qualities were so extraordinary that we now plan to resurrect the entire work, making it yet another flagship of the continuing Opera Rara mission. Michael Spyres will return to Opera Rara to continue his championship of the title role. Following close behind *Guido* will be Auber's *La Muette de Portici* (The Mute Girl of Portici, 1828), an opera of enormous historical significance, almost single-handedly creating the Grand Opera genre but still lacking a recording that shows us its true originality. Finally, we plan yet another absolute rarity: an opera of the first rank that has never been recorded complete. This is Massenet's youthful, Spanish-inspired comedy *Don César de Bazin* (1872), which was written for the three principals who would later create Bizet's *Carmen* and which is today known almost exclusively by the famous "Sevilliana" recorded by Amelita Galli-Curci and many other star sopranos of times past.

"Opera Rara's role rediscovering the lost operatic heritage of the 19th-century is both unique and invaluable"

Juan Diego Flórez

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **CARLO RIZZI**



To become Artistic Director of Opera Rara is for me an honour and a joy. With this great organisation I will be able to further my interest in little known operatic jewels and, I hope, to inspire you and the artists that I will be working with on this journey. For me, there's something special and exciting about opening a score and working through the music, with the singers, without the presence of a performing 'tradition'. It is sometimes daunting but it is also

exhilarating, which is why I am hugely looking forward to the interesting and varied repertoire that we are planning.

For me, and I am sure I can speak for many of our Opera Rara artists, a very important part of these projects is you – the donors, the sponsors, the stakeholders, the audience – who through your support and commitment show us, the performers, that we are not alone in believing in what we do. You are part of the Opera Rara community and are important to us not only for your financial generosity but also because, with your interest and your enthusiasm, you inspire us to give our very best. I am looking forward to meeting you all and discussing our future plans with you.

***“Enter Opera Rara,
the little record label who could do it”***

The Spectator

THE OPERA RARA ARTISTIC FAMILY

Famed for the quality of our casting, we draw on the world's leading opera singers for our studio recordings and concerts. We are also known for introducing some of the most exciting young operatic talent. For both established and emerging artists, we offer a unique recording platform where their talents can be captured in a recording of the highest technical quality and presented on London's major concert stages. Recent Opera Rara established artists have included Ermonela Jaho, Michael Spyres, Joyce El-Khoury Albina Shagimuratova and Daniela Barcellona; but we are also proud to have introduced exceptional young artists such as Arsen Sghomonyan, David Junghoon Kim and Misha Kiria, whose international recording careers have been launched with us.

“There couldn't be a better team for this work”

The Daily Telegraph

“Opera Rara is an invaluable institution that has broadened the horizons of the opera world, by rediscovering the great lost works of the past. No other institution has done as much for the world of opera in terms of research, recording, and education than Opera Rara and we all owe them a debt of gratitude. Countless individuals such as myself have made their careers with the help of Opera Rara.”

Michael Spyres, world-famous tenor whose recordings with Opera Rara include *Les Martyrs* (2015), *Le Duc d'Albe* (2016) and a solo recital disc, *Espoir* (2017).





OPERA RARA AT 50

50 years of operatic excellence is a major landmark for any artistic institution. To have reached this stage with almost no public funding shows the enormous commitment of our loyal and generous family of supporters. Their faith in the quality for which we are celebrated sustains our mission. Financial support that will enable us to continue our journey into new realms of live operatic archaeology is as vital and urgent as ever. Please join us in securing the next fifty years! Be part of a global community that creates a legacy of rare and

“Any lover of opera should be grateful for the existence of Opera Rara. I know the value of this work from my own experience recording Donizetti’s Rosmonda d’Inghilterra with them. Without Opera Rara, recordings like that just wouldn’t be made and countless musical treasures would remain essentially lost, unheard and unappreciated by contemporary and future audiences.”

Renée Fleming, Opera Rara Artistic Patron who made her first ever recording with us in 1994.



Albina Shagimuratova and Mirco Palazzi, recording Rossini’s *Semiramide* in August 2016

“L’Ange de Nisida is richly worthy of revival and its sterling qualities are honoured by Opera Rara’s fine performance”

The Daily Telegraph
on the world-premiere performance, 20 July 2018

CHAIRMAN CHARLES ALEXANDER

OPERA RARA: SUPPORTING A NEW ERA OF EVEN GREATER GLOBAL, ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC AMBITION



For Opera Rara's fiftieth anniversary and under Carlo Rizzi's new artistic leadership, we aim to raise £500,000 per year, or £2 million over four years. Led by the Trustees and under the direction of Chief Executive Henry Little and his team, we rely on the generosity of our committed and loyal supporters. At the same time, we search for new donors who can join the wider Opera Rara "family". Opera Rara is a charity which currently receives no public funding: every pound we spend on our artistic programme has to be raised

privately. Our earned income from the sale of our recordings and ticket revenue, alongside support from our Trustees, covers Opera Rara's fixed costs. Therefore every pound we receive will go towards the cost of delivering our artistic programme. In common with most major opera companies we work collaboratively with a series of partners, including orchestras, concert halls, artists and – again like all major companies – we need to plan our opera projects several years in advance. This is especially important for us given the long time span between our decision to rediscover a masterpiece and to bring it to life through a studio recording and concert. Your support will help us to deliver our plans and keep the operatic legacy alive. Join us and build an enduring legacy of rare and glorious work for future generations to enjoy.

"Opera needs Opera Rara"

Luciano Pavarotti

"Opera Rara relies upon the generosity of passionate opera-lovers to support its work. I'm delighted to be one of them and I would encourage you to do the same."

Sir Simon Robertson, Opera Rara supporter and member of the Opera Rara Circle.



David Junghoon Kim and Joyce El-Khoury performing the world-premiere of Donizetti's *L'Ange de Nisida* at the Royal Opera House in July 2018.

"The history of art is the history of rediscovery. I love to work with Opera Rara because they make fabulous operatic rediscoveries come to life for us all to enjoy. In this noisy world, they make music from the past, beautiful music that sings to our inner spirit now and in the future."

Ermonela Jaho, award-winning soprano and star of Opera Rara's recordings of *Zazà* (2016) and *Le Willis* (2019)



OPERA RARA

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Renée Fleming

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Photos:

Page 2 (L-R): Carlo Rizzi; Henry Little; Roger Parker.

Back Cover:(L-R): Ermonela Jaho; Michael Spyres and Joyce El-Khoury; David Junghoon Kim; Misha Kiria; Maurizio Benini; Albina Shagimuratova; Carlo Rizzi; Arsen Soghomonyan; Laurent Naouri; Sir Mark Elder; Daniela Barcellona; Daniele Rustioni.



Brian Mulligan, Arsen Soghomonyan and Ermonela Jaho, performing Puccini's *Le Willis* at the Royal Festival Hall in November 2018

“Opera Rara’s splendid concert allowed us to hear this novelty in its original form for the first time in 145 years, and it proved a winner”

The Daily Telegraph
on Puccini's *Le Willis*, 21 November 2018

“a winning evening... another Donizetti restored to the repertoire. Job done.”

Classical Source
on Donizetti's *Il Paria*, 8 June 2019

