



## Completely impassioned by the young Verdi

The Heidenheim Opera Festival (OH!) is issuing a live recording of another early Verdi opera, "Ernani", as part of its multi-award-winning series. Marcus Bosch conducts the festival orchestra Cappella Aquileia, the Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno and a select ensemble of soloists – an attested highlight of the 2019 German summer opera season.



### Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901): Ernani

Ernani: Sung Kyu Park  
Don Carlos: Marian Pop  
Don Ruy Gómez de Silva: Pavel Kudinov  
Elvira: Leah Gordon  
Giovanna: Stephanie Henke  
Don Riccardo: Christoph Wittmann  
Jago: Lancelot Nomura

**Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno, Petr Fiala (chorus master), Zuzan Kadlciková (rehearsals) | Cappella Aquileia | Marcus Bosch, Musical Director**

Coviello Classics // Release: Jan 10, 2020

#### DISC I

- [1] Preludio
- [2] Introduzione (Choir)
- [3] Recitativo e Cavatina Ernani
- [4] Cavatina Elvira
- [5] Scena, Duetto, indi Terzetto (Carlo/Giovanna), Carlo/Elvira, Carlo/Elvira/Ernani)
- [6] Finale I
- [7] Introduzione (Choir)
- [8] Recitativo e Terzetto (Siva/Ernani, Silva/Ernani/Elvira)

- [9] Scena ed Aria Carlo (later with Choir)
- [10] Duetto Ernani e Silva (later with Choir)

#### DISC II

- [1] Scena Carlo
- [2] Congiura (Choir)
- [3] Finale III
- [4] Festa da Ballo (Choir)
- [5] Scena e Terzetto Finale (Ernani/Elvira, Ernani/Elvira/Silva)

With his fifth opera, "Ernani", the 31-year-old Giuseppe Verdi scored a sensational success, and in many ways also set the course for his unique career as a composer for the stage: it was the first time he drew on a contemporary drama (a work by Victor Hugo that, incidentally, caused a huge scandal at its première), his first collaboration with the librettist Francesco Maria Piave and his first clear use of the voice type that came to be known as the "Verdi baritone". The work also features his typical imposing choruses and, of course, extremely catchy melodies. After the acclaimed première in March 1844, the lanes of Venice echoed to the singing of those who had just heard the opera, according to contemporary reports. Thanks to the productions in Vienna, London and Paris that quickly followed, "Ernani" also marked the start of Verdi's international career.

The plot, typical of the time, about the (at first seemingly inappropriate) love between the robber chief Ernani, who is, however, really a prince (here sung by Sung Kyu Park), and a grandee's niece, Donna Elvira (Leah Gordon), who is also lusted after by both her (adoptive) uncle Don Ruy Gómez de Silva (Pavel Kudinov) and King Don Carlo (Marian Pop), gives ideal scope to the emerging Verdi-Piave recipe for success: a focus on extreme – indeed, sometimes exaggerated – characters and the musical depiction of their psyches.

This approach demands, above all, subtle nuances from all the performers. And, in the unanimous opinion of critics, **Marcus Bosch** succeeded virtually perfectly in bringing these out at the 2019 Heidenheim festival: he "animates his musicians to play in dazzling fashion with fresh vigour, transparency and colour, lightens up any formulaic um-ta-ta and makes chamber-music-like passages such as the sombre start of the third act glow and sparkle," Josef Oehrlein wrote in Opernwelt. According to the online music magazine, Bosch's expressive conducting chisels out "the finer aspects of the almost overblown emotions in the score. Particularly in the first two acts, one hears a sound that is still completely impassioned by the young Verdi." The **Cappella Aquileia** shines with "rhythmic rigour and subtly-shaded dynamics" (Karin Coper in Orpheus) and, transforming itself as if by magic, sometimes turns into the "sonorous guitar of an invisible troubadour who provides a knowing and comforting accompaniment to the deepest thoughts of the little people lost in Absurdistan" (Eleonore Büning in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung).

The singers carry equal conviction. **Sung Kyu Park**, who received his diploma at the "Giuseppe Verdi" Conservatory in Milan, sings the title role with enormous effect; **Marian Pop** makes one "forget the dramatic weaknesses [of the libretto] with his velvety, flowing baritone"; and **Pavel Kudinov** sends "chills down the spine" of the listeners with his "splendid black bass" (omm.de). And for the neue musikzeitung, the soprano voice of the young Canadian **Leah Gordon** in this Heidenheim "Ernani" is nothing less than "the musical discovery of this year: her voice is ideal for the young Verdi. Nothing is forced; everything is sung with flawless intonation: vocal elegance of the finest calibre." The performance is rounded off vocally by the absolutely convincing festival chorus: the **Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno**, directed by Petr Fiala.

Marcus Bosch also sees this "Ernani" as a milestone in his Heidenheim discography to date: "I think the 'Ernani' recording takes things to another level in the much-praised OH! series of early Verdi. The soloists, chorus and the Cappella Aquileia take on the 'tinto' of the young Verdi more and more. Following the composer's path chronologically year for year is a great gift for me." So one doesn't have to be a prophet to predict that this Heidenheim production has got what it takes to become a benchmark recording in the modern Verdi exegesis, and that it is likely to make all opera lovers prick their ears. And, at the same time, it already whets the appetite for the next sensational Verdi experience from the Heidenheim Opera Festival.

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