

Vanessa Benelli Mosell puts Italian opera centre stage in a new album entitled *Casta Diva*



Friday 13 November 2020

Decca Classics | 4855290

Casta Diva

Recollections of operas by **Rossini, Bellini, Verdi, Puccini, Donizetti**, and **Busoni** transcribed by **Liszt, Chopin, Ginzburg, Thalberg, Carignani** and **Wittgenstein**

Vanessa Benelli Mosell piano

Italian pianist **Vanessa Benelli Mosell** turns from Stockhausen to the drama of Italian opera for her new album ***Casta Diva***, to be released on **Decca Classics** on **Friday 13 November 2020**.

Benelli Mosell has assembled a collection of popular arias, overtures and themes from *Norma*, *La Bohème*, *Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Madama Butterfly* and more in virtuosic arrangements by some of the great pianists of the 19th and 20th centuries. From lyrical variations by Chopin and Wittgenstein to pyrotechnics from Liszt, Thalberg and Ginzburg, these piano renditions unleash the instrument's full capabilities, taking on the might of the orchestra. Often unapologetically flashy, these transcriptions provided not just a demonstration of technical prowess but also served as a haunting memory of opera in the days before recordings.

Vanessa Benelli Mosell said:

"I went to see my first opera Boris Godunov at the age of 3 in Florence and was transfixed by the children's choir of the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. At five, I joined them entering the world of the theatre, performing, rehearsing and living with a pantheon of opera stars and conductors such as Semyon Bychkov, Riccardo Chailly and Zubin Mehta. It was inspirational and it is utterly wonderful to return to this world of opera through the prism of the piano. It is my dream one day to be able to conduct these great operas as well."

Encompassing a century of Italian opera from Rossini to Puccini, the album takes its name from Bellini's iconic aria *Casta Diva* from *Norma*, contrasting the "diabolic" 15-minute paraphrase of **Liszt's *Réminiscences de Norma***, with a transcription by the famous virtuoso **Sigismond Thalberg**, a pupil of Moscheles and Hummel.

Following Bellini's death in 1835, these two great piano rivals of the day found themselves guests at a soirée in Paris organised by Princess Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, a friend of the late composer. For the evening's entertainment, a set of variations was proposed in homage of Bellini. Liszt eventually gathered these variations by some of the most important pianists of the day in a collection entitled *Hexaméron*, including **Chopin's** haunting variation on the 'March' from *I Puritani*, which Benelli Mosell includes in *Casta Diva*.

Puccini appears in the simple arrangements of his devoted friend Carlo Carignani: 'Che gelida manina' and 'Quando me n' vò' from *La Bohème*. Vanessa Benelli Mosell also includes **Wittgenstein's** idiosyncratic left-handed arrangement of the famous humming chorus from *Madame Butterfly*, written after the pianist lost his right arm in the First World War.

Russian pianist Grigory Ginzburg created an amusing piano rendition of **Rossini's 'Largo al factotum'** from *Barbiere di Siviglia* which captures the cunning antics of that famous barber. Following Liszt's *Rigoletto* paraphrase and *Reminiscences de Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Casta Diva* culminates in Liszt's spirited transcription of the finale to **Rossini's *Guglielmo Tell***.

With six previous releases on Decca Classics, rising star **Vanessa Benelli Mosell** has garnered acclaim both for repertory classics and her championing of the newest composers. She received universal praise for her **recordings of Stockhausen** and recently recorded **Ravel's *Concerto in G*** with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra for the label.

Full release details

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Rossini 'Largo al factotum' from *Barbiere di Siviglia* (transcr. Ginzburg)

Bellini *Casta Diva* from *Norma* (transcr. Thalberg)

Liszt *Paraphrase sur Rigoletto* (Verdi)

Chopin *Hexaméron: Variation No. 6* ('March' from Bellini's *I Puritani*)

Liszt *Réminiscences de Norma* (Bellini)

Puccini 'Che gelida manina' from *La Bohème* (transcr. Carignani)

Busoni 'Turandots Frauengemach' from *Zwei Klavierstücke aus den Elegien*

Bellini *Quatuor de I Puritani* (transcr. Thalberg)

Liszt *Réminiscences de Lucia di Lammermoor* (Donizetti)

Puccini 'Quando me n' vò' from *La Bohème* (transcr. Carignani)

Wittgenstein 'Sailors' Chorus from *Madame Butterfly* from *School for the left hand, III. Transcriptions* (Puccini)

Rossini 'Ouverture: Finale' from *Guglielmo Tell* (transcr. Liszt)

Vanessa Benelli Mosell



"The diva of the piano"

- La Repubblica

"Powerful, emotional, romantic and dramatic, she sweeps us along in a dazzling display of assured technique."

- The Guardian

"Mosell is a serious artist with a formidable technique and forthright musical personality."

- The Telegraph

"Stockhausen is enlivened by bright and enthusiastic reading by Vanessa Benelli Mosell"

"She plays with fearless determination"

- La Repubblica

"Vanessa Benelli Mosell has the power to let people appreciate my music."

- Karlheinz Stockhausen

Italian pianist Vanessa Benelli Mosell is a rising star on the international music scene, continuously praised for her dazzling virtuosity, technical brilliance and the sensitivity of

her musical insight that she brings to her piano playing, as well as to her conducting and directing from the keyboard. Benelli Mosell's charismatic artistry and natural leadership are quickly establishing her as one of the most interesting personalities in the young conductor's generation. Combining sheer power and boundless imagination, her electrifying musicality has been shaped significantly in mentorships with Karlheinz Stockhausen and Yuri Bashmet.

Vanessa is acclaimed for her passion, in equal measure, for the great classics of the repertory and her championing of the newest composers.

She has received universal praise for her recordings of Stockhausen for DECCA and for her concerto debut CD of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No.2 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

She now has six releases for DECCA CLASSICS, most recently an album of Ravel, featuring the Concerto in G with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

The upcoming 19/20 season will see her making her debut with the Orchestre National de France under the baton of Sir George Benjamin, performances at the Al Bustan Festival in Beirut and with the Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar de Venezuela, among others.

18/19 saw her achieving new heights making her debut with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra performing Ravel's jazz-inflected Concerto in G, concerts at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre with the London Philharmonic Orchestra rejoining Southbank three months later for a performance during the 2019 Stockhausen Festival at the Royal Festival Hall. She revisited the Ravel Concerto in G at Al-Bustan Festival in Beirut and launched the 2019 Festival Presences at Auditorium de Radio France in Paris.

Later highlights include her debut at La Scala in Milan and Turin's Teatro Regio at the MiTo Festival; solo recitals at the Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam and at the Seoul Arts Center; a portrait concert at the National Concert Hall, Dublin in Ireland for RTÉ with concerti by Rachmaninov and George Benjamin; chamber music making with the renowned Russian violinist Vadim Repin; an extensive tour of China making celebrated solo debuts at Beijing National Centre for the Performing Arts, Harbin Grand Theater and Chongqing Guotai Arts Center among other venues; praised performances at Salle Gaveau in Paris, performing Chopin First Piano Concerto with Orchestre Padeloup, and her Rachmaninov Album launch recital at Salle Cortot in Paris.

Further orchestral appearances include concerts with the Orchestra del Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Orchestra del Teatro Regio di Torino, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, Münchner Symphoniker, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, Edmonton Symphony, Flint Symphony, Israel Camerata, Jerusalem Symphony and the Moscow Soloists, with whom she replaced Martha Argerich as soloist.

Since making debuts at New York's Lincoln Center, Tonhalle Zurich and London's Wigmore Hall, Benelli Mosell has given concerts and solo recitals at Hamburg's Laeiszhalle, Berliner Philharmonie, Auditorio Nacional de Madrid, Palau de la Musica Catalana in Barcelona, Auditorio de Saragoza, Palau de la Musica in Valencia, Auditorium de Radio France and Auditorium du Louvre in Paris, Auditorium Manzoni in Bologna, Sala Verdi in Milan, Dublin National Concert Hall, Haifa Auditorium, Seoul Arts Center, Muziekgebouw Amsterdam, Harbin Grand Theater, Beijing NCPA, London's Royal Festival Hall and Kings Place, La Scala in Milano, Teatro Regio in Turin, Salle Poirel in Nancy, Corum in Montpellier, Théâtre de la Criée in Marseille, Bavaria's Schloss Elmau, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and Usher Hall in Edinburgh. As conductor she led the Wiener Kammer Orchester making the Austrian Première of *Incanto* (2001) by the French Composer Eric Tanguy in Vienna. Additionally, she conducted the *Divertimento Ensemble* in Milano and the Berlin Sinfonia in Berlin among others.

Vanessa Benelli Mosell is internationally renowned for her performances of Karlheinz Stockhausen's Klavierstücke. Following her recording of Klavierstücke I-IV, she was invited by the composer to study under him, as he believed that she "has the power to let people appreciate my music".

Vanessa worked closely with the composer and he remains an important influence on Vanessa's music making, encouraging her passion for contemporary music and her championing of composers of today as well as the great classics.

Since becoming a key figure in the music of Stockhausen Benelli Mosell has had collaborations with many leading contemporary composers including George Benjamin, Hugues Dufourt, Stefano Gervasoni, Martin Matalon and Marco Stroppa among others.

As a chamber music performer she collaborated with Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Julian Rachlin, Vadim Repin, Massimo Quarta, Daishin Kashimoto, Radovan Vlatkovich and his frequent partner the French cellist Henri Demarquette, with whom she released the album "Echoes" for DECCA, a juxtaposition of works by Philip Glass and Sergey Rachmaninov for cello and piano.

Vanessa Benelli Mosell began playing the piano at the age of three, starting her comprehensive musical studies and giving her first public appearance at four years old. At seven years old, she was exceptionally admitted at the International Piano Academy in Imola where she studied with Franco Scala. She gave her orchestral debut as soloist at the age of nine followed by her New York debut appearance at eleven years old with pianist Pascal Rogé, who described her as "the most natural musical talent I have encountered in my entire life". In 2007 she was invited to the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory to study with Mikhail Voskresensky before pursuing her studies with Dmitri Alexeev at the Royal College of Music in London, where she graduated in 2012, generously supported by the Russell Gander Award. In addition to her piano studies, she went on studying violin, singing, score reading, composition and conducting.

She has been supported by the Keyboard Charitable Trust and in 2016 was appointed as a Steinway Artist.

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