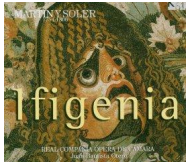


Vicente Martin y Soler – Ifigenia (Otero) [2007]

Written by bluesever

Monday, 31 August 2015 16:07 - Last Updated Monday, 31 August 2015 16:10

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Disc: 1 1. Sinfonia - Senza indicazione di tempo 2. Sinfonia - Andante 3. Sinfonia - Presto 4. Arcade, oh dio 5. L'aflitta genitrice 6. Nacqui tanto sventurata 7. Sventurata mia figlia 8. Se della prole accanto 9. D'una languida speme 10. Perano i greci 11. Alle tempeste in seno 12. Signor... Che miro! 13. Tranquilla e già l'onda 14. No, non è ver 15. Io veggio Amore 16. Amor mi chiama in campo 17. Felice chi nell'umile fortuna 18. Ma che mai veggio 19. Padre... sposa... amico

Disc: 2 1. Misero me! 2. L'agricoltor si lagna 3. Chi per pietà mi dice 4. Deh! se mi sei fedele 5. Ecco Achille 6. Difendi, Achille 7. Ifigenia, perdona 8. Lascia, ch'io mora 9. Se i detti miei 10. Se il tuo dolore 11. E possibil sarà 12. Così mi lasci? 13. Son qual tigre 14. Pe' il gran bosco di Trivia 15. Va crescendo il mio dolore 16. Figlia l'estremo addio prendi 17. Piegà al destin la fronte 18. Padre... scomparve già 19. Innocente, oh dei, se moro

Ifigenia - Olga Pitarch, soprano Achille - Betsabée Haas, soprano
Arcade - Celine Ricci, soprano Ulisse - Marina Pardo, mezzo-soprano Agamennone - Leif Aруhн-Solén, tenor
REAL COMPAÑÍA ÓPERA DE CÁMARA Juan Bautista Otero – director

“The exhilarating force, expressivity and technical demands of an opera like *Ifigenia* leave us dumbfounded.” Conductor Juan Bautista Otero certainly whets the appetite with his impassioned advocacy of Martín y Soler’s opera seria, premiered in Naples in 1779. In the event, rapture was distinctly modified. There are incidental pleasures in this adaptation (by librettist Luigi Serio) of the Euripides tragedy famously treated by Gluck five years earlier. But with his easy-going musical personality (“sweet” and “graceful” were the epithets repeatedly used by his contemporaries), thin orchestral textures and restricted harmonic range, Martín was not the man to embody the agonies of these characters of antiquity in extremis. The arias of Agamemnon and Iphigenia just before her sacrifice (averted at the last second by Diana’s intervention) are, yes, graceful, and mildly touching. But you don’t have to know your Gluck to feel their inadequacy to the dramatic situation. Elsewhere Martín gratifies his singers’ vanity with reams of vapid coloratura, most implausibly, to our ears, in what should be an anguished duet for Iphigenia and her lover Achilles. Even the potentially climactic quartet that ends the first act suggests no more than faint agitation. Here, perhaps more than anywhere, Martín’s short-breathed melodic style and harmonic limitations are seriously exposed.

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Otero – whose performing edition conflates Acts 2 and 3, and omits the character of the slave Elissena – conducts with vigour and an understanding of period style, though he and the engineers allow the continuo (harp alternating with harpsichord) an irritatingly aggressive prominence in the arias. Of the five singers, only the pleasing, slender-toned young Swedish tenor Leif Aruhn-Solén, as Agamemnon, has a sufficiently secure coloratura technique. Olga Pitarch, the Iphigenia, is shallow of tone and liable to shrillness above the stave (the optimistic cadenza in her opening aria di bravura had me wincing). Betsabée Haas, in what was originally a castrato role, sings prettily enough in Achilles' decorous final rondò but is found out in the vertiginous scales and arpeggios of the hero's "battle" aria. Nor are singers of the two lesser roles – the sternly pragmatic Ulysses and Achilles' friend Arcas – specially alluring, though Marina Pardo throws herself with a will into the vigorous aria where Ulysses compares himself to a rampaging tiger. I'm glad to have heard Ifigenia once. But this admittedly flawed performance confirms that only in the comic-pastoral world of *Una cosa rara* and *L'arbore di Diana* – his two greatest successes – was Martín truly in his element. --- Richard Wigmore, gramophone.co.uk

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