

# CLASSICAL COLLECTIONS

13 x 50

By Andrea Colombini



**I**talian conductor and presenter of UK Sky Arts', *Passions on Puccini*, Andrea Colombini, shares his favourite classical arias as he curates musical collections from the medieval Tuscan city of Lucca and the famous Golden Hall in Vienna. Interpreted by the accomplished Lucca Philharmonic Orchestra, this is a collection of musical treats as Andrea contextualises the genius of Mozart, the masters of Italian Opera, the popularity of Puccini and the grandeur of Wagner.

Prepare for an emotional musical journey that pairs some of the best Italian Opera singers with this fine orchestra. Under Andrea's expert baton, we will experience a passionate interpretation of some of the most popular opera classics ever written.



Andrea Columbini

Episode Synopses: 13 x 50 minutes

#### Great Opera in Vienna:

Episode 1 starts with Strauss' *Fledermaus Overture* from the famous Golden Hall – the Musikverein in Vienna. Synonymous with that city, the popularity of Strauss is complemented by the genius of Mozart and our collection takes in an overture and the *Queen of the Night Aria*, *Der Holle Rache*. Whilst the famous Hall was being built, Bizet was shocking Parisian audiences with his outrageous *Carmen* and the *Entr'Acte 1* is followed by the *Toreador Aria and Chorus*. Wagner's music was performed here in his lifetime and this great master closes our first Vienna collection. We'll hear *Mild und Leise* from *Tristan and Isolde*, featuring the renowned soprano, Francesca Pattane and to close, a passionate interpretation of the *Overture from Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*.

#### Great Italian Opera in Vienna:

Episode 2 features Italian Opera from the Musikverein and this Hall boasts the perfect acoustic for opera performance. We'll hear Verdi's *Overture from La Forza Del Destino* and *Di quelle Pira* from *Il Trovatore*, followed by *Libiamo* from the ever popular, *La Traviata*. Contrasting the high operatic style of Verdi with the more popular melody of Puccini, three arias from *Tosca* are enchanting – *Recondita Armonia*, *Te Deum* and *Lucevan Le Stelle*. And no Italian Opera collection would be complete without the music of Mascagni. From the famous *Cavalleria Rusticana* the Lucca Philharmonic and singers will perform the *Prelude* and *Siciliana* and the *Intermezzo*.

#### Musical Novelties from Vienna:

Episode 3 is a collection of 'novelties' from Vienna's famous Golden Hall. Andrea's talented singers and orchestra have broken new ground by bringing popular opera to this traditionally symphonic concert hall. From the poignant love story, *La Boheme*, we'll experience Rudolpho's romantic aria, *Che Gelita Manina* and his love's response, *Si Mi Chiamano Mimi*. *La Boheme* is packed with beautiful melodies and Andrea's passionate interpretation of *Soave Fanciulla* is followed by the rousing finale from Act 2, featuring Musetta's famous Waltz. Lucca's three leading tenors perform the traditional festival melodies, *Adeste Fideles*, *Tu Scendi dalle Stelle* and *O Sole Mio*. To round off this hour of novelties, we welcome the Senior Pipe Major of the Scots Guards, British Army, Major

Ross McCrindle to the stage. Andrea mixes Scottish and Italian tradition for a rousing bagpipe finale, *Time to Say Goodbye*.

Puccini in Lucca:

Episode 4 and Andrea is back in Lucca. This medieval Tuscan walled city was home to Giacomo Puccini, the most performed opera composer in the world. The Puccini Festival concert series plays nightly homage to Lucca's famous son and this collection comes from the beautiful Church of San Giovanni, where Puccini was organist. We'll experience an evening of soaring melody with *Un Bel Di Vedremo*, the *Intermezzo* and *Donna Non Vidi Mai* from *Manon Lescaut*, *Vissi D'Arte* and the famous love duet, *Mario Mario Mario* from *Tosca*. *E Luceval Le Stelle* is followed by two of Puccini's most famous and well loved arias, *O Mio Babbino Caro* from *Gianni Schicchi* and *Nessun Dorma* from *Turandot*.

Lucca, City of Opera!

Episode 5 and the genius of Giacomo Puccini is even more apparent when his music is played alongside that of the other Italian Great Masters. Puccini was the final chapter of Italian Opera history and this programme features masterpieces of the Italian tradition. We'll hear from Rossini with the famous *Overture from La Gazza Ladra* to kick us off and then the mastery of Verdi. A stunning selection of music includes *Celeste Aida* and *Tacea la Notte Placida* from *Il Trovatore*, the *Overture from Nabucco* and the famous chorus of the Hebrew slaves, *Va Pensiero*. Then from *Leoncavallo*, Andrea brings us *Vestila Giubba* and *Mattinata*. Who better to round off this collection than the tenor, Nicola Simone Mugnaini with his emotional rendition of *O Sole Mio*.

Puccini – Italy's Maestro

Episode 6. The art of Giacomo Puccini is universally popular and this collection features performances of his music from Lucca, Pisa, Vienna and Grosseto. As you'd expect from a Puccini collection, we'll enjoy all the most famous tunes, interpreted for different Italian concert venues. The beauty of the Orchestra is matched by Andrea's passionate conducting and we'll hear from some of Italy's finest singers as they perform the *Intermezzo* from *Manon Lescaut*, the heartbreaking *Death of Mimi* from *La Boheme* and *Recondita Armonica* and *Vissi D'Arte* from *Tosca*. No Puccini collection would be complete without featuring *Turandot*. The children's chorus will join the stage for the famous *La Sui Monti Dell'Est* and the music continues with *In Questa Reggia*. To finish off, we'll hear the world famous arias, *O Mio Babbino Caro* and *Nessun Dorma*, sung by a cantata of tenors in the Golden Hall in Vienna.

The Genius of Mozart

Episode 7. In spite of Andrea's love of Puccini, he still regards Mozart as the greatest opera composer who ever lived and episode seven is his collection of Mozart's genius. Indeed Giacomo Puccini would have agreed with this point of view, travelling to Salzburg, as he did at the end of his life, to try and conclude his unfinished masterpiece, *Turandot*. This homage to Mozart includes the *Overture from the Magic Flute* and the arias *Non Piu'Andrai Farfallone Amoroso* and *Dove Sono I Bei Momenti*, followed by the famous duet, *Pa Pa Pa Pa*. We'll hear from *The Marriage of Figaro* and Andrea's favourite aria, *Ruhe Sanft* from *Zaide*. The aria from *The Queen of the Night* will be followed by the *Finale* from *Don Giovanni*.

## Opera's Great Love Stories

Episode 8. The power of music is the perfect way to interpret human emotion and opera composers rose to the challenge of interpreting love's joy and pain. A good love story is at the heart of any great opera and this collection explores Puccini's tragedies - *Tosca* and *La Boheme* and features the famous love song from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. The youthful tenor voice of Michael Alfonsi concludes this episode with two arias – Donizetti's *Una Furtiva Lagrima* and Puccini's *Donna non viai mai* from *Manon Lescaut*.

## Women in Opera

Episode 9. It was Giacomo Puccini who challenged established norms by putting women at the centre of his storytelling and this collection will focus on their pivotal roles in his operas. Their fragility and complexity is explored through his central characters and this episode contrasts the purity of Gianni Schicchi's Lauretta with *La Boheme*'s flirty Musetta. But it wasn't just Puccini who conveyed emotion through his female leads – Mozart's evil Queen of the Night and Wagner's Isolde also feature in this episode with powerful performances from Sonia Bellugi and Francesca Patane.

## Great Opera from Vienna II

Episode 10. Andrea's Lucca Philharmonic Orchestra and Singers is the first ensemble to perform at the famous Golden Hall in Vienna, in front of arguably the most exacting classical music audience in the world. This collection features the great masters who were loved by the city in their lifetimes. From Mozart, Austria's famous son to Verdi, universally acclaimed in Vienna for his rousing operas and the French genius of Berlioz and of course, Lucca's hero, Giacomo Puccini, this Collection guarantees to entertain and inspire.

## Great Opera from Vienna III

Episode 11. In his day, Giuseppe Verdi was acclaimed in Vienna for his grandiose operas and this Collection starts with a homage to his mastery – we'll hear from *Nabucco*, *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*, before enjoying the famous *Musetta's Waltz* from Puccini's *La Boheme* with an ensemble of young, energetic singers and featuring Melissa Di Biasio. Before a rousing finale, as Lucca's three tenors enchant with *O Sole Mio*, The Lucca Philharmonic performs a spectacular rendition of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg*, under Andrea's expert baton.

## Vive La France!

Episode 12. A fine tradition of French classical music was encouraged by King Louis XIV, who established an orchestra in court of Versailles, under the guidance of Jean Baptiste Lully. Lully composed the lion's share of France's court music in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, before meeting an untimely death after injuring himself conducting! From Lully to Berlioz and his *Damnation de Faust* this French collection explores a range of styles. Bizet wrote his famous opera, *Carmen*, as a flamboyant description of Spain, even though he never went there and Offenbach's playful *Les Oiseaux dans la Charmille* features Sonia Bellugi as the wind-up doll. In complete contrast, we'll hear two *Pavannes* from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Impressionists, Faure and Ravel.

## **Quick March!**

**Episode 13.** The march is one of the oldest styles of music ever composed and of course, it was adopted by many composers to inject energy, rhythm and colour into their operas. Mozart was inspired to compose the march by his hero, Handel and the latter is credited with the traditional, British Grenadiers. Berlioz's grand opening of The Damnation of Faust features his Marches Hongroise depicting the approach of the Hungarian Army and Johann Strauss Senior's Redetzky March celebrated military victory. As well as these, this Collection features American composer, Sousa and England's Edward Elgar with two of the famous Pomp & Circumstance marches. To finish, Andrea has invited his friends from the Pipes & Drums of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Scots Guards to perform at Lucca's Teatro del Giglio.

