

Press Release

Opera Rara

June 2015 recordings

DONIZETTI: LE DUC D'ALBE

Opera Rara's 24th opera recording by Donizetti

GOUNOD: LA COLOMBE

Opera Rara's first studio recording of an opera by Gounod

This month, **Opera Rara** embark on back-to-back recording projects – Donizetti's *Le duc d'Albe* and Gounod's *La Colombe* - with their Artistic Director **Sir Mark Elder** conducting the **Hallé**. Following last year's release of Donizetti's *Rita* which marked the company's 50th complete opera recording to date, this is Opera Rara's second collaboration with the Hallé. *La Colombe* will be released in November while *Le duc d'Albe* will be available next spring.

Opera Rara has characteristically assembled impressive casts for the two recordings: **Laurent Naouri**, **Angela Meade** and **Michael Spyres** - who made his Opera Rara debut in their recently acclaimed release of Donizetti's *Les Martyrs* - take up the title roles of Le duc d'Albe, Hélène d'Egmont and Henri de Bruges in *Le duc d'Albe*. For *La Colombe*, Laurent Naouri returns to sing his second role for Opera Rara as Maître Jean and is joined by **Erin Morley** as Sylvie, **Javier Camarena** as Horace and **Michèle Losier** as Mazet.

Donizetti abandoned his score for *Le duc d'Albe* in 1839 after completing only the first two acts due to conflicts of interest with the Opéra de Paris where he had originally intended to première the opera. *Le duc d'Albe* remained unfinished until over 30 years after Donizetti's death when it was completed by one of his former pupils, Matteo Salvi, using the composer's notes for acts three and four. While the opera has sporadically received performances since its première in 1882 in its Italian translation (*Il duca d'Alba*), the opera in its original French version only received its première in 2012 by Vlaamse Opera using an edition prepared by Opera Rara's Repertoire Consultant, Roger Parker. Opera Rara will record the first two acts using this new critical edition for Ricordi in what will be the first ever studio recording of *Le duc d'Albe*.

With the recording of *La Colombe*, which will also mark the company's first foray into the musical world of Gounod, Opera Rara continues its expansion from Italian bel canto repertoire to French operas of the same period. Despite public approval of Gounod's farcical opéra-comique at the time of its première in 1860 in Baden-Baden, the 1866 revival of *La Colombe* at Paris's Opéra-Comique – in the extended two-act version which Opera Rara will record – ran for only 26 performances. Already boasting complete operas by Massenet and Thomas, as well as chamber operettas by Viardot and Wekerlin in its extensive catalogue, Opera Rara recently won the CD (Complete Opera) category at this year's International Opera Awards for their recording

of Offenbach's *Fantasio* featuring Sarah Connolly and Brenda Rae. Future projects exploring French repertoire include two further operas by Offenbach in 2017 and 2019.

Opera Rara's final recording project this year sees them tackle their first opera by Leoncavallo: *Zazà* with **Maurizio Benini** conducting the **BBC Symphony Orchestra** and **Ermonela Jaho** in the eponymous title role. As per Opera Rara tradition, the company will present *Zazà* in a concert-performance at the Barbican on Friday 27 November following a week of recording sessions.

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