

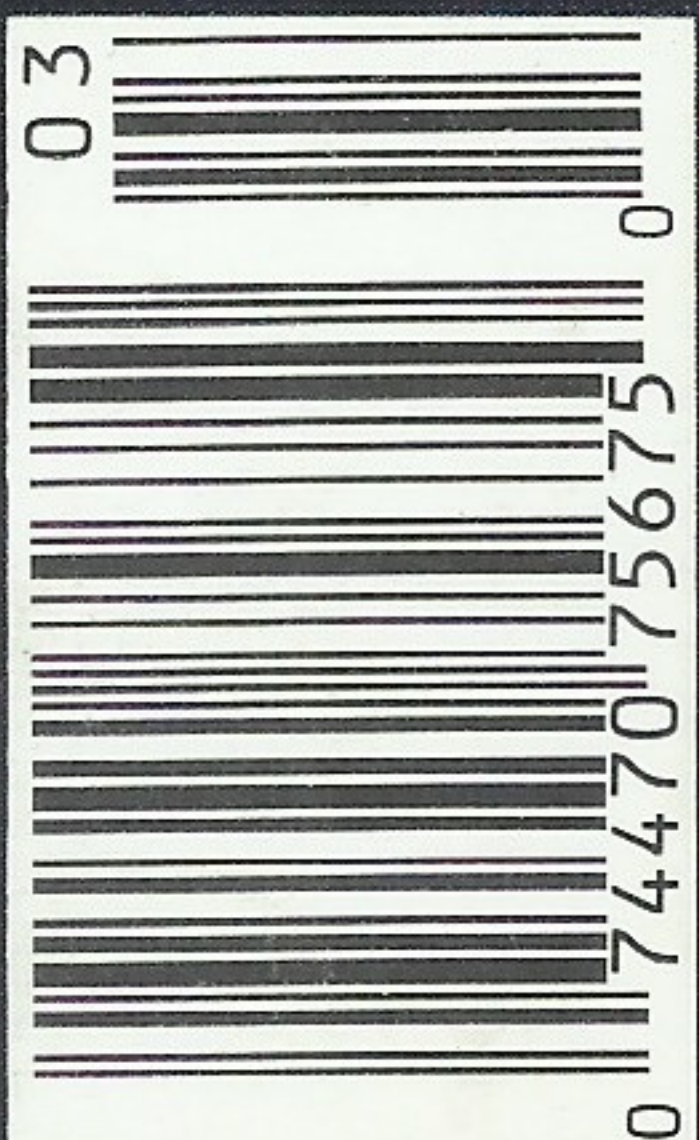
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Anfuso's art may, despite the above animadversions, appeal to some *Fanfare* readers. If you think that you may be one of these, you might begin with the frottola disc, which, with its simpler melodies, seems to provoke fewer of her unusual qualities. *Caveat emptor.* **Tom Moore**

CONCHITA SUPERVIA. Conchita Supervia, mezzo-soprano; Angelo Albergoni conducting the unnamed orchestra. LEBENDIGE VERGANGENHEIT 89023 [AAD]; 61:06. (Distributed by KOCH International.)

MOZART: *Le nozze di Figaro*: Non so più cosa son; Voi che sapete. **ROSSINI:** *Il barbiere di Siviglia*: Una voce poco fa; Contro un cor (with Giovanni Manuritta). *La Cenerentola*: Nacqui all'affano. **BIZET:** *Carmen*: È l'amore uno strano augello; Presso il bastion di Siviglia; Noi s'ha in vista un bell'affare (with Anita Apolloni, Ida Mannarini, Giuseppe Nessi, Aristide Baracchi). **SAINT-SAËNS:** *Sansone e Dalila*: O Aprile foriero di sogni. **HUMPERDINCK:** *Hänsel und Gretel*: Mamma questo fiasco (with Ines Maria Ferraris); Vien fratello (with Ines Maria Ferraris). **R. STRAUSS:** *Der Rosenkavalier*: A me concesso fu l'onore (with Ines Maria Ferraris); Final duet (with Ines Maria Ferraris).

A year ago, this release would have been most welcome, but Preiser should have closed the barn door sooner; the cattle have already bolted. The selections on Preiser duplicate the repertoire on Club 99-74 and EMI CDH 7 63499 2. It is true that Preiser offers the earlier 1927 Fonotipia *Carmen* excerpts in Italian as opposed to the more complete 1930 Odeon recordings in French on EMI. So what? The Fonotipias offer nothing new, and a whole lot less since they are in Italian and have inferior assisting singers.

Preiser's transfers are perhaps a little better than Club 99, but not enough to warrant another purchase while Keith Hardwick's transfers on EMI are the best of all. That EMI disc offering the mezzo's classic Rossini recordings and *Carmen* excerpts is the essential Supervia operatic disc to acquire. It's a pity that Preiser didn't concentrate on the mezzo's marvelous song repertoire, which cries out for release on CD.

James Camner

MIRIAM MEGHNAGI: SHIRAT MIRIAM. SONGS IN EXILE. Miriam Meghnagi, vocalist; Domenico Ascione, guitar. FONÈ 89 F 08 CD [DDD]; 54:51. Produced by Giulio Cesare Ricci. (Distributed by Allegro.)

Kaddish. Shiharti et devirech. Oh dortn, dortn. Baruch Mordechai. Papir und tint. S'dremlen Feygl. Partizaner lid. Morenika. Shirat Miriam. Los bilbilikos kantan. Bat shirati. Oy el dia de Purim. Oy dire gelt. Ehafez haim. Kiria yefifa.

Fifty years ago I discovered *The Wayfaring Stranger*, Burl Ives's fifteen-minute sustaining radio show and became hooked on "folk music." I bought records by Ives, Richard Dyer-Bennett, Sam Hinton, Tony Kraber, Tex Ritter, Carl Sandburg, and many others both domestic and foreign—including an album of Yiddish songs by a singer whose name now escapes me. I reveled in such music until I took a year-long graduate seminar in the traditional ballad, and discovered that no self-respecting folklorist would be caught dead listening to such recycled truck. Nevertheless I retained a sneaking love for what I'll call "art-folk" and when this disc came my way I enjoyed it thoroughly.

Miriam Meghnagi is not of the folk. She is a highly educated woman who holds degrees in philosophy, psychology, and ethnomusicology. (She has made it her mission to collect and disseminate the far-flung music of the Jewish peoples—whatever can be salvaged from North Africa, Italy, the Near East, and the lost *shtetls* of Europe.)

She sings in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Italian, and a number of obscure dialects. I suppose her voice could best be described as a mezzo-soprano; at least, she sings mostly in a rather limited middle register. I doubt that it is a trained voice in the usual sense of that term, but it is well controlled. The style in which she sings is what I think of as "international pop": she whispers, she belts, she croons, she sobs. Perhaps it is the style proper to her material, but I have a suspicion that Meghnagi could master the blues without much trouble—though it would be a rather polite blues.

(What is immediately attractive about most of her repertoire is its tunefulness and its catchiness. As advertised, it comes from a wide variety of sources. "Kaddish" is from Livorno (home of Fonè Records) and is sung partly in Bajitto, the local Jewish dialect. "Baruch Mordechai" is a Yemeni song for the Feast of Purim and smacks of the cantorial tradition. "Papir und tint" (Paper and Ink)

is a delightful Yiddish love-song. “S’dremlen feygl” and “Partizaner lid” (Partisan Song) are products of the Holocaust and probably do not really qualify as folksongs. “Shirat Miriam” in Hebrew is a version of the song of Miriam, the sister of Moses, from Exodus. “Oy dire gelt” is a nineteenth-century song of social protest which sounds like a Hassidic dance-song, whereas the Hassidic “Ehafez haim” does not.

The accompanying booklet, in Italian and English, contains a biography-cum-puffery of the singer, a short piece by her on the content of her songs, a longish and highly generalized article by a Professor Fubini on Hebraic folklore, and three pages of pinky-nail comments on the individual songs. We are told that Meghnaghi considers the preservation of texts of the utmost importance—but she gives us nary a word of text in any language and not even the titles are translated. Nevertheless this is a lovely record and I recommend it for its musical interest alone.

David Mason Greene

TERESA BERGANZA SINGS CANTATAS BY MONTEVERDI, VIVALDI, HAYDN AND ROSSINI.

Teresa Berganza, mezzo-soprano; Marcello Viotti conducting the English Chamber Orchestra. CLAVES CD 50-9016 [DDD]; 56:26. Produced by Teije van Geest. (Distributed by Qualiton.)

MONTEVERDI: *Lamento d'Arianna*. **VIVALDI:** *Piangi, gemo*. **HAYDN:** *Ariadne auf Naxos*. **ROSSINI:** *Giovanna d'Arco*.

I was somewhat apprehensive when I sat down to listen to this recital. After all, Teresa Berganza has been around a long time. According to Riemens's *Biographical Dictionary of Singers*, she was born in 1934 and has been before the public for thirty-five years. I had not heard her for the last half dozen and had no idea of her vocal estate when she made this recording in London in May 1990. The opening phrases of the Monteverdi were not reassuring, but by the time she hit her stride, in the Haydn, the voice resumed most (not, I admit, all) of its youthful splendor. It is much heavier and darker than it used to be and does not run on quite the oiled track of its springtime years. But it is still an impressive instrument and Berganza at fifty-six has become a vocal tragedienne, an Ariadne abandoned, such as she never was at twenty or thirty. Besides the singer, the songs—or rather the cantatas—are a main attraction of this release. All have been recorded by other artists but never with the orchestral accompaniments offered here, by Claudio Gallico (Monteverdi), Virgilio Montati (Vivaldi), and two others who will be named below. You may find these orchestrations of accompaniments intended merely for continuo instruments or a piano to be either an advantage or a sticking point, depending on how much of a purist you are. For me, the addition of “inauthentic” orchestral support for the mezzo-soprano is, in this instance at least, an advantage.

The Vivaldi cantata, which consists of two arias separated by a recitative, could well be a lament by Ariadne, as are the Monteverdi and Haydn selections. But here the lamentor and the man who abandoned her are not specified. The first aria takes the form of a noble Adagio over a ground bass; the second, faster but still in the mode of lament, contains elements of variation technique. Berganza sings this cantata with far greater ease than she does the Monteverdi, which puts greater strains on her upper voice, especially when she attempts to swell on the opening words, “Lasciatemi morir.” I know of only one other recording of Vivaldi's “Piangi, gemo,” by the counter-tenor James Bowman (Arion ARN 68046). As an abandoned damsel he is grotesque, and his falsetto, compared with Berganza's contralto, is as a satyr to Hyperion (to garble Shakespeare). Bowman, of course, has only the continuo instruments for accompaniment, whereas Berganza is floated on a cloud of downy, if inauthentic, string-orchestra tone.

The long Haydn cantata *Arianna a Naxos* (identified by Claves, ridiculously, in German as *Ariadne auf Naxos*, although Berganza sings it in Italian, as it was written) presents us with a more ambitious orchestration of the original fortepiano part, by one of Haydn's pupils, Sigismund Ritter von Neukomm. It is a version for full symphony orchestra and has never been recorded before. Readers with long memories will recall Jennie Tourel's powerful recording of the original setting, later joined by impressive versions by Janet Baker and Jessye Norman. Norman is a soprano, the others mezzo-sopranos, probably the vocal color Haydn had in mind in composing the cantata (although he accompanied Nancy Storace, Mozart's first Susanna, in a performance in London in 1791). It has always seemed to me that *Arianna a Naxos* cried out for an orchestral accompaniment.