

The background of the entire cover is a close-up photograph of a rusted metal sculpture. The sculpture has a central vertical pole that branches out into several curved, arm-like structures. The metal is heavily corroded, with patches of brown and orange rust contrasting with the greyish-blue base metal. The background is a light-colored, textured wall.

JOHANN SIMON MAYR
ELENA

OPERA IN 2 ACTS

WAGNER • OCHOA • GRACZYK
MALLMANN • SCHÄFER • CAPITELLI
FEITH • ZHI • THUM • MATTERSBERGER

SIMON MAYR CHORUS
CONCERTO DE BASSUS

FRANZ HAUKE

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

JOHANN SIMON
MAYR
(1763–1845)

Elena

Opera semiseria in two acts (1814)
Libretto by Andrea Leone Tottola (?–1831)
First performance: 28 January 1814, Teatro de' Fiorentini, Naples, Italy

Elena / Riccardo	Julia Sophie Wagner, Soprano
Costantino	Daniel Ochoa, Bass
Paolino / Adolfo	Mira Graczyk, Soprano
Carlo	Niklas Mallmann, Bass
Edmondo	Markus Schäfer, Tenor
Anna	Anna-Doris Capitelli, Mezzo-soprano
Ernesta	Anna Feith, Soprano
Governor	Fang Zhi, Tenor
Herald	Harald Thum, Tenor
Urbino	Andreas Mattersberger, Bass

Simon Mayr Chorus
Concerto de Bassus (Theona Gubba-Chkheidze, Concertmaster)
Franz Hauk

Recorded: 17–25 August 2018 at Kongregationssaal, Neuburg, Germany

The Italian libretto, together with a German translation, may be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti.660462.htm

1	Sinfonia	8:15	Scene 8		
	Act I		16	Trio: Oh Ciel! che miro! (<i>Costantino, Riccardo, Carlo</i>)	5:12
	Scene 1		Scene 9		
2	Introduction: Come veloce ruota tu giri (<i>Peasants, Anna, Ernesta, Urbino</i>)	5:15	17	Recitative: Povero Costantino, quanti sofferto avrai stenti (<i>Riccardo, Costantino, Carlo, Urbino, Anna</i>)	1:45
3	Recitative: Or bene al padre tuo (<i>Urbino, Anna, Ernesta</i>)	1:14	18	Finale: Che ascolto! (<i>Riccardo, Anna, Urbino, Costantino, Carlo, Ernesta, Herald, Governor, Guards, Paolino, Shepherd, Elena, Adolfo</i>)	17:37
4	Aria: Che dolce piacere (<i>Urbino</i>)	5:06		Act II	
5	Recitative: Eh vada pure (<i>Anna</i>)	0:17		Scene 1	
	Scene 2		19	Recitative: Entriamo, e al Conte Edmondo (<i>Ernesta, Anna, Urbino</i>)	0:57
6	Aria: Quanno co la perucca (<i>Carlo</i>)	6:09	20	Trio: S'è ver, che un vivo ardore (<i>Anna, Ernesta, Urbino</i>)	3:15
	Scene 3		Scene 2		
7	Recitative: Oh gran virtù del canto! (<i>Carlo, Anna, Ernesta</i>)	1:46	21	Recitative: Tosto al Governor di Tarascone (<i>Governor, Ernesta, Anna, Urbino, Edmondo</i>)	2:20
8	Duet: Buon dì ... pardon garbato (<i>Riccardo, Carlo</i>)	7:16		Scene 3	
9	Recitative: Or via giacchè s'iam soli (<i>Carlo, Riccardo, Urbino, Anna</i>)	3:21	22	Oh tu, che ognor fastosa – Aria: Vieni a me ... (<i>Edmondo, Guards</i>)	8:48
	Scene 4		Scene 4		
10	Aria: Brutto uccello di rapina! (<i>Anna</i>)	3:52	23	Recitative: Governatore è vero ciò che intesi testè? (<i>Edmondo, Governor, Carlo</i>)	3:57
11	Recitative: Non son chi son (<i>Urbino, Paolino, Riccardo</i>)	0:55		Scene 5	
12	Romance: Un Provvenzale d'illustre stato (<i>Riccardo, Paolino</i>)	4:42	24	Duet: Chiaro favella, e breve (<i>Edmondo, Carlo</i>)	6:24
	Scene 6		25	Recitative: E un vil pastor de miei voler vantarsi delusore potrà? (<i>Edmondo, Carlo, Governor</i>)	1:52
13	Quartet and Chorus: Cantiam de' nostri cuori (<i>Chorus, Carlo, Harvesters, Anna, Ernesta, Paolino, Urbino</i>)	7:49		Scene 6	
14	Scene: Son solo ... o miei sospiri! – Aria: Ah! se mirar potessi (<i>Costantino</i>)	9:43	26	I sensi generosi – Aria: Di pietà, che in te favella (<i>Governor</i>)	4:59
	Scene 7				
15	Recitative: A dir ver il Signor Governatore (<i>Carlo, Costantino, Riccardo</i>)	2:45			

27	Recitative: Tutto rigore egli è, ma il vero ignora (<i>Edmondo, Elena, Adolfo, Carlo</i>)	2:52
Scene 7		
28	Aria: Ah! non partir! (<i>Elena</i>)	5:48
29	Recitative: Oh cor di madre a che non giungi mai? (<i>Edmondo, Carlo, Elena</i>)	1:05

Johann Simon Mayr (1763–1845) Elena

A rescue opera based on a French model

Simon Mayr spent the 1813–14 carnival season in Naples, and on 28 January 1814, at the Teatro de' Fiorentini, he produced an *opera semiseria* entitled simply *Elena* after its heroine. The work was subsequently revived in cities in northern Italy – first at La Scala in Milan in the autumn of 1816, and then at the Teatro degl'Intrepidi in Florence in spring 1819. For both stagings, the composer or a local director of music and librettist made alterations, changes and adaptations to suit the needs and demands of the theatre in question. As a result of this, the opera also appeared under the title *Elena e Co(n)stantino* (the two main characters).

The libretto was the work of the Neapolitan house librettist Andrea Leone Tottola. Tottola was an old hand when it came to writing for the theatre; experienced and reliable, he worked for most of the mid-19th-century Italian composers including Rossini, for whom he wrote several librettos. The first print of the libretto of *Elena* describes it as a 'dramma per musica, tratto da un argomento francese' – an opera based on a French source. The reference is to Jean-Nicolas Bouilly's text for Étienne Méhul's opéra-comique *Hélène* (Paris 1803). Bouilly had also written the libretto *Léonore, ou L'amour conjugal*, on which Paër's *Leonora*, Beethoven's *Fidelio* and Mayr's *L'amor coniugale* are all based. Later printings of the libretto describe it as a 'dramma eroicomico' or 'heroic-comic opera' – a standard designation for works belonging to the mixed, *semiseria* genre.

Scene 8		
30	Scene and Sextet: Ma qual gente si appressa? (<i>Edmondo, Anna, Elena, Carlo, Chorus, Guards, Governor, Costantino</i>)	10:27
31	Recitative: Guardie, colui che tanto cercaste è in poter vostro (<i>Edmondo, Carlo, Anna, Costantino, Elena, Governor, Adolfo, Urbino</i>)	3:12
Scene 9		
32	Finale: Gnorsi ... nuje ve credimmo (<i>Carlo, Chorus, Adolfo, Edmondo, Anna, Governor, Urbino, Costantino, Elena</i>)	2:02

These French subjects are in the rescue opera mould popular during the post-revolutionary Napoleonic era, in which an innocent hero or heroine is accused of a capital offence they have not committed and condemned to death, before finally, after various mishaps and complications, escaping by the skin of their teeth and having their names cleared. Catering for a popular audience, the Teatro de' Fiorentini in particular had innumerable sources adapted to create Neapolitan one-act farces or two-act *semiseria* operas. This intermediate *semiseria* genre with its prevailing earnest, *seria* tone, is enriched with elements of *opera buffa*; there is usually a comic character (in the present work, the rich Neapolitan large-scale farmer Carlo) who speaks Neapolitan dialect, whereas the more socially elevated characters use standard Italian. Moreover, as in French *opéra comique*, the music numbers are connected by dialogue that drives the action forward, meaning that as soon as a work of this type was exported to other cities, these spoken parts had to be recast as *secco* recitative. Mayr's *Elena* was no exception. Furthermore, *Elena e Costantino* was set to music a number of times; for example, after Mayr, the composers Ramón Carnicer and Carlo Coccia both wrote versions, produced in Barcelona in 1821 and Lisbon in 1822 respectively.

Along with the obligatory *buffo* role, the motif of disguise so beloved of *opera buffa* is typical of *semiseria* operas, as is appropriate local colour, generated by extensive use of the chorus together with musical and orchestral detail. The action, on the other hand, moves towards a climax in

which death is a real and imminent threat, before suddenly unravelling thanks to an ultimately benign fate to reach a happy end tricked out with plenty of 'felicità' (joy or bliss).

The plot of this particular *opera semiseria* is complex and characteristic of this type of *pièce à sauvetage*. First the events leading up to the opera. Duke Costantino, the son of Adolfo, ruler of Arles in southern France, was falsely accused of murdering his father by Romualdo, one of Adolfo's relatives. This enabled Romualdo to usurp the throne, and Costantino had to flee the country. Elena, Costantino's consort and princess of Tarascon, fled separately, disguised as a man. In the end, she arrived at the property of Carlo, a Neapolitan farmer who had settled in Provence many years previously with his daughter Anna and the shepherd Urbino. Elena, under the pseudonym Riccardo, and her son Adolfo, alias Paolino, entered Carlo's service. Now the usurper has died, though not before confessing his crime to his son and heir Edmondo.

Act I opens with Carlo suspicious about Elena's identity and finally discovering the truth. Tired of his long banishment, Costantino returns to Tarascon to obtain news of his wife. He has a chance encounter with Carlo, who guesses who he is; a rumour is circulating that the banished Costantino has returned. Elena and Costantino meet, but are handed over to Edmondo's henchmen. The Governor and people call for both to be killed, while Carlo tries in vain to free them from their predicament. At the start of Act II, Edmondo is torn. On the one hand, he faces the shame of Romualdo's crime, on the other he sees the necessity of giving Costantino justice. The couple and their son are discovered and brought before a court. In the meantime, however, Edmondo has abandoned his loyalty to his dead father and reveals the crime and Costantino's innocence. All receive the news with joy and acknowledge the great courage that has enabled Edmondo see justice done.

Despite the critics' gloomy predictions, the work was a great success and was given a total of around 40 performances in Milan alone. Both the ensemble, who were very well known in Naples – Margherita Chabrand (Elena, soprano), Felice Pellegrini (Costantino, bass), Antonino Casaccia (Adolfo/Paolino, soprano), Savino Monelli (Edmondo, tenor), Carlo Maranzato (Governor of Arles, tenor), the famous *buffo* bass Carlo Casaccia (Carlo),

Francesca Checcherini (his daughter Anna, mezzo-soprano), Paolina Potenza (his daughter Ernesta, soprano), Giovanni Pace (Urbino, a shepherd in Carlo's service, bass) – and the composer took several curtain calls. In Milan, only the ensemble – Giuseppina Fabbre (Elena), Ranieri Remorini (Costantino), Carolina Pedrotti (Adolfo), Claudio Bonoldi (Edmondo), Giovanni Antonio Biscottini (the Governor), Nicola Bassi (Carlo), Orsola Fei (Anna), Carolina Ghiappa (Ernesta) and Luigi Picchi (Urbino) – was given this honour because, a contemporary source tells us, Mayr only visited La Scala incognito.

'The first opera this season was an *opera semiseria, Elena e Costantino*, composed two years ago by Kapellmeister Sim. Mayr in Naples. The music is pleasant and was liked here in Milan', the Leipzig *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* wrote of the autumn 1816 season at La Scala. Everyone singled out the opera's big draw, the sextet in Act II. The French critic and novelist Stendhal (the pen-name of Marie-Henri Beyle, who was intimately acquainted with the Italian opera scene of the time, a connoisseur, and an early biographer of Rossini) reported that people travelled long distances to hear this 'morceau de génie'. This alerted even Goethe to it, with the result that he asked his friend Zelter to get a copy of the music for him.

The opera comprises an overture and 16 music numbers, which were linked by spoken dialogue in Naples and *secco* recitatives in northern Italy. Using the accepted forms of a musical language shaped by late Neapolitan opera and Viennese Classicism, Mayr employs choruses and recitatives to develop the dramatic action and drive it forward, and punctuates it with arias, romances and ensembles that provide lyrical points of stasis. The Act I Finale is the most extensive number, with several interlocking sections leading up to the *colpo di scena* and conveying the exceptional drama, particularly in Elena's part. The sextet towards the end of Act II that people spoke so highly of, with its melancholy Largo central section, allows the protagonists to pour out their feelings over simple string pizzicatos, before at length leading into the final 'felicità' of a short vaudeville scene that rounds off the positive overall impression created by this superb opera from Mayr's mature period.

Thomas Lindner
English translation: Susan Baxter

Synopsis

Act I

[2] Two peasants are at a grinding wheel sharpening scythes. The wheel is a symbol: whoever rises first, quickly falls, whoever is lying in the dust, rises. Urbino, a shepherd in the service of Carlo, a large-scale farmer, scolds Carlo's two daughters Anna and Ernesta, and the three engage in some banter.

[3] Urbino seems jealous of the new arrival Riccardo, a stranger he sees as a rival. He says he will complain to Carlo about his impertinent daughters.

[4] In his aria, Urbino underlines his looks, education and talents.

[5] Anna doesn't rate Urbino's chances of success if he complains to her father.

[6] Carlo arrives. He turns out to be a cheery Neapolitan whose zest for life and love of singing cannot be dampened even by financial difficulties and adversity.

[7] Anna and Ernesta complain to their father about Urbino's loose talk. Carlo has naturally already realised that despite his male clothing, Riccardo is in fact a woman. He wants to get to the bottom of this strange state of affairs.

[8] Carlo and Riccardo meet. To begin with, Riccardo is evasive. Carlo feels sympathy for him.

[9] 'Riccardo' reveals her identity. She says she is Elena, Princess of Tarascon and wife of Count Costantino. Costantino is suspected of having killed his father while out hunting, she explains. To escape their pursuers, she and Costantino fled. They split up so that they could make more rapid progress, and she abandoned her child (Paolino) outside Carlo's farm. Carlo found the boy three years ago, took him in, and has treated him like a son. Urbino comes up and reports that the Governor is looking for strangers who are in hiding. He has therefore reported Paolino.

[10] Anna energetically resists Urbino's ambitions to marry her, calling him an 'evil bird of prey' ('Tristo uccello di rapina').

[11] Paulino wants Riccardo to tell him the 'tale of the man from Provence'.

[12] In the Romance, Riccardo relates his own fate like a fairy tale. Paolino listens attentively.

[13] Meanwhile, Costantino has mingled with the farmhands, posing as a mower. They all sing the praises of rural life and of love.

[14] Costantino clearly has no idea how close his family are. He is desperate. 'I lost you not far from here as I was fleeing from my pursuers', he muses when he is alone.

[15] While Carlo is seeing to Costantino, he has a hunch. He calls Riccardo.

[16] In the ensuing Trio, Costantino and Riccardo celebrate their reunion.

[17] Costantino tells how Romualdo, the traitor who usurped his rights, has now died, though his son and heir Edmondo is clearly a chip off the old block. Urbino joins them. He wants to give Riccardo, his supposed rival, his marching orders.

[18] By the time the Governor appears, Costantino is already on the run again. The Governor interrogates those present, recognises Paolino as Costantino's son, and makes to arrest him. Elena then steps forward, revealing her identity. Now Elena and Carlo are taken into custody as well.

Act II

[19] Anna, Ernesta, and even Urbino intend to speak up for Carlo before Count Edmondo.

[20] The two sisters reproach Urbino for his timidity. He retorts that he always tries to avoid danger; he values his own skin.

[21] The Governor has a message taken to Edmondo. It's urgent, he says. He suggests Carlo's daughters and Urbino should try to track Costantino down in the surrounding woods. Edmondo seems unhappy about the way things are developing.

[22] In a soliloquy, Edmondo turns against the 'baleful ambition' that has had such evil consequences. The guards report that Elena and Paolino are in Edmondo's power.

[23] Edmondo intends to reveal his secret. He has Carlo brought in.

[24] Carlo's evasive answers do not satisfy Edmondo. The Governor demands the crime be punished and Costantino put to death.

[25] The Governor suggests a ruse to Edmondo, namely freeing Carlo and Elena, then keeping them under secret observation.

[26] The Governor again. He claims clemency is not appropriate. The murderer should not be allowed to live.

[27] Carlo, Elena and Adolfo alias Paolino, waiting alone. Edmondo listens to them talking. When Carlo mentions that Costantino fled into the woods nearby, Edmondo suddenly steps out and joins them.

[28] Edmondo's enquiries fail to yield any results. He therefore threatens to kill the child.

[29] Elena is prepared to go to her death as well.

[30] The Governor and the people demand the death penalty. Suddenly, Costantino appears, protests his innocence and prepares to accept his fate. There is general fear and consternation.

[31] Something unexpected happens. Edmondo stations his guards outside. He asks to speak privately. To the small circle of people who remain, he confirms that Costantino is innocent; on his deathbed, Edmondo's father Romualdo left his son a written confession that he, Romualdo, killed Costantino's father Adolfo.

[32] Everyone celebrates the happy ending and Elena & Costantino. The identity of the true murderer is not revealed in public.

Franz Hauk

English translation: Susan Baxter



Photo: Lena Kern

Julia Sophie Wagner

Julia Sophie Wagner made her name first as a specialist in Baroque music. Her repertoire also spans the major Classical and Romantic oratorios. She has also performed contemporary music, notably in association with Steffen Schleiermacher. She made her acclaimed debut at The Kennedy Center, Washington, DC in Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, and during the 2019 season she was a soloist with the ensemble of Oper Leipzig, of which she is a guest artist. She has appeared on recordings and in music videos and festival concert programmes, including the children's work *Princess Elise*. Wagner studied at the Weimar and Leipzig Musikhochschule and McGill University, and has won various national and international competitions. She has received awards from DAAD and Oper Leipzig.

<https://juliasophiewagner.de>

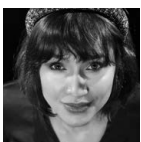


Photo: Christian Palm

Daniel Ochoa

Baritone Daniel Ochoa received his early training in the Gewandhaus youth choirs with Anthony Baldwin, Hans-Joachim Beyer, Thomas Quasthoff, Christa-Maria Ziese and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. He has collaborated on a number of recordings with the Gewandhausorchester, St Thomas Choir, Stuttgart Chamber Choir and the Munich Bach Choir, and has appeared with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle and Philharmonic, Bach-Collegium Stuttgart, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Staatskapelle Halle, Telemann Chamber Orchestra, Lautten Compagny, Berlin and the Leipzig Baroque Orchestra. He has worked with conductors such as Herbert Blomstedt, Reinhard Goebel and Helmuth Rilling. In 2003 he won First Prize in the Albert Lortzing Competition in Leipzig and in the following year became an award holder of the Richard Wagner Scholarship Foundation. <https://daniel-ochoa.de>

Photo: Jürgen Wahnschaffe



Mira Graczyk

Mira Graczyk, a native of Bochum, gained her first experience as a singer with the Alla Polacca Children Choir at the Grand Theatre in Warsaw and the Laudate Dominum Children's Choir. After gaining a diploma in violin, she started vocal training at the Stanislaw Moniuszko Academy of Music, studying as a coloratura soprano with Aleksandra Kucharska-Szeffler. She made her operatic debut as Barbarina in *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Opera Bałtycka. From 2009 to 2014 she studied at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover with Markus Schäfer. She has been the recipient of various national and international awards.

Photo: Lars John



Niklas Mallmann

Prizewinning bass-baritone Niklas Mallmann began his career in the Tolz Boys' Choir, appearing in various opera houses with distinguished conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Sigiswald Kuijken and James Levine. He later sang with the Men's Choir of the Tolz Boys' Choir, including as a soloist, and studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München. He has performed at the Gärtnerplatztheater and the Bayerische Staatsoper, and appeared in concerts with various orchestras. Performances also include opening the Lucerne Festival concert with Dvořák's *Biblical Songs*, and his debut as Papageno at the 2016 Rota das Artes Festival, Lisbon.

Photo: Werner Kmettsch

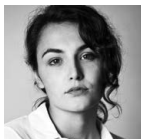


Markus Schäfer

The tenor Markus Schäfer studied singing and church music in Karlsruhe and Düsseldorf with Armand McLane. He has received prizes in Berlin and Milan, and made his debut at the Zurich Opera Studio, followed by engagements at the Hamburg State Opera and the Düsseldorf Deutsche Oper am Rhein. His subsequent career has seen appearances in major theatres and concert halls in Europe and the US, collaborations with distinguished conductors and a number of award-winning recordings. He teaches singing at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover.

www.tenor-markus-schaefer.de

Photo: Jo Titz



Anna-Doris Capitelli

German-Italian mezzo-soprano Anna-Doris Capitelli was for two years a member of the Accademia Teatro alla Scala and won various competitions, including in Berlin and Istanbul. Acclaimed for her warm tone and virtuosity as a coloratura, she has received awards from various foundations. In 2017 she made her debut at La Scala as Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, in the work's first performance there in German. Other roles have included Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Tisbe (*La Cenerentola*), Dryade (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) and Ida (*Die Fledermaus*). She has appeared as a guest at Staatsoper Hannover, and performed in numerous Lieder recitals and concerts.

<http://annadoriscapitelli.com>

Photo: Monika Cavellus-Feith



Anna Feith

Anna Feith completed her studies at the Hochschule für Musik Würzburg under Monika Bürgener. During the course of her training she devoted herself particularly to Early Music, participating in the Tage der Alten Musik and appearing in Monteverdi's *Vespers*. She is a member of the vocal ensemble of the Bavarian Baroque Orchestral Academy, where she develops her knowledge of early Baroque performance practice and singing. She has appeared with Ensemble Le Ninfe di Meno and in the Early Music at Schleissheim Palace series. She also enjoys a busy concert schedule. www.annafeith.de

Photo: Wang Jiachen



Fang Zhi

The multi-award-winning tenor Fang Zhi studied at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover. In 2015 he was invited to a singing festival at the Colburn School where he participated in masterclasses and studies with John Aler, Ann Murray and Susanne Mentzer, and performed with Graham Johnson and John Musto. He joined the Shanghai Conservatory Middle School where he studied with Bian Jing Zu, graduating in 2013. From 2013 to 2017 he studied at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music in Singapore, where he participated in masterclasses with William Sharp, Michael Halliwell, Maree Ryan and Margaret Schindler.

Photo: Iris Winkler



Harald Thum

Born and raised in Ingolstadt, Germany, Harald Thum studied singing at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München under Hanno Blaschke. Since 1990 he has been a chorus member of the Bayerische Staatsoper, regularly taking solo roles and appearing under conductors including Wolfgang Sawallisch, Zubin Mehta, Kent Nagano and Kirill Petrenko. As a soloist he has sung standard concert repertoire, such as Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *The Creation* and Mozart's *Requiem*. He has also appeared on recordings and broadcasts.

Photo: Andreas Mattersberger



Andreas Mattersberger

Austrian bass Andreas Mattersberger began his career in 2004 at the Tyrol Regional Conservatory and in the same year made his debut as Don Giovanni in the Opéra-Studio de Genève. In 2005 he joined the Tirolean Regional Theatre under Brigitte Fassbaender, remaining a member until 2012. He has also appeared with the German National Theatre, Darmstadt, Saarbrücken and Brunswick State Theatres, the Graz, Leipzig, Halle and Kiel Operas, Gasteig München and numerous festivals. He has appeared widely throughout Europe and in Mexico, has an operatic repertoire of some 45 roles, and a vast discography.

www.andreasmattersberger.com

Photo: Anna Götz



Franz Hauk

Born in Neuburg an der Donau in 1955, Franz Hauk studied church and school music, with piano and organ, at the Munich Musikhochschule and in Salzburg. In 1988 he took his doctorate with a thesis on church music in Munich at the beginning of the 19th century. Since 1982 he has served as organist at Ingolstadt Minster, and since 1995 also as choirmaster. He has given concerts in Europe and the United States and made a number of recordings. Since October 2002 he has taught in the historical performance and church music department of the Hochschule für Musik und Theater, Munich. He founded the Simon Mayr Chorus in 2003.



Concerto de Bassus

Concerto de Bassus is an international ensemble engaging young musicians keen to play music from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries according to period performance practice in various orchestrations. The ensemble recruits both professors and outstanding graduates of the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München, and also realises large symphonic orchestrations. The group takes its name from the bass, the fundamental element of Baroque music.

Simon Mayr Chorus

The Simon Mayr Chorus, joined on this recording by members of the Bavarian State Opera Chorus, was founded by Franz Hauk in 2003, and is committed to delivering excellent performances of works ranging from the 16th to the 21st centuries. Its membership largely consists of vocal students from the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München, members of the choir of Munich's Bavarian State Opera, and trained singers from the Ingolstadt region. The ensemble's vast discography features works by Mayr, Donizetti, Paër and Robert Helmschrott, including world premiere recordings. Its albums have been released on Naxos. <http://www.simon-mayr-chor.de>

Johann Simon Mayr (1763–1845) Elena

Mayrs *Elena* – eine Rettungsoper nach französischem Vorbild

Zur Karnevalsaison 1813/14 hielt sich Simon Mayr in Neapel auf und brachte am 28. Januar 1814 im Teatro de' Fiorentini eine Opera semiseria unter dem die Protagonistin benennenden einteiligen Titel *Elena* heraus. Dieses Werk erlebte in der weiteren Folge Reprisen in norditalienischen Städten, zunächst an der Mailänder Scala im Herbst 1816, sodann am Teatro degl'Intrepidi in Florenz im Frühjahr 1819, wobei der Komponist oder ein lokaler Kapellmeister bzw. Librettist nach den Bedürfnissen und Anforderungen der jeweiligen Theater Adaptionen, Veränderungen und Umarbeitungen durchführte. Im Zuge dessen erschien es auch unter dem zweiteiligen, das Protagonistenpaar hervorhebenden Titel *Elena e Costantino*.

Das Libretto wurde vom neapolitanischen Hauslibrettisten Andrea Leone Tottola verfasst. Tottola war ein versierter und verlässlicher Theaterroulinier, der für die meisten Komponisten des Primo Ottocento arbeitete, darunter auch etliche Titel für Rossini beisteuerte. Der Librettoerstdruck weist das Stück als „dramma per musica, tratto da un argomento francese“, mithin als Oper nach einem französischen Stoff, aus. Damit war die Opéra-comique *Hélène* (Paris 1803) gemeint, deren Textbuch Jean-Nicolas Bouilly für Étienne Méhul geschrieben hatte, derselbe Bouilly übrigens, von dem auch die Vorlage *Léonore ou L'amour conjugal* von Paërs *Leonora*, Mayrs *L'amor coniugale* und Beethovens *Fidelio* stammt. In späteren Librettodrucken firmiert die Oper meist unter der für die Mischgattung der Semiseria gängigen Genrebezeichnung „dramma eroicomico“, also heroisch-komische Oper.

Diese französischen Sujets gehören zu dem in der postrevolutionären napoleonischen Zeit beliebten Typus der Rettungsoper, in dem die unschuldige Hauptfigur, eines nicht begangenen Kapitalverbrechens bezichtigt, zum Tod verurteilt und schließlich, nach etlichen Irrungen und Wirrungen, diesem knapp entrinne kann und rehabilitiert wird. Insbesondere für das volkstümliche Teatro de' Fiorentini wurden zahllose Vorlagen zu neapolitanischen einaktigen Farse oder zweiaktigen Opere semiserie verarbeitet. Diese „mittlere“ Gattung mit ihrem ernststen Seria-Grundton ist indes mit Elementen der Opera buffa angereichert, es gibt meist

eine komische Rolle (im gegenständlichen Werk: der reiche Großbauer und Neapolitaner Carlo), die im neapolitanischen Dialekt agiert, während die höherstehenden Figuren in der italienischen Hochsprache singen. Zudem spielt sich die Handlung zwischen den eigentlichen Musiknummern wie in der Opéra-comique in gesprochenen Dialogen ab, was zur Folge hatte, dass, sobald ein derartiges Werk – wie auch Mayrs *Elena* – in andere Städte exportiert wurde, diese Sprechpartien als Secco-Rezitative neu komponiert werden mussten. *Elena e Costantino* wurde übrigens mehrmals vertont, nach Mayr noch etwa von den Komponisten Ramón Carnicer (Barcelona 1821) und Carlo Coccia (Lissabon 1822).

Gattungstypisch für die Semiseria sind einerseits neben der obligaten Buffo-Rolle auch die in der Opera buffa beliebten Verkleidungs- und Tarnungsmotive sowie das durch starke Chorpresenz und musikalisch-orchestrals Details evozierte Lokalkolorit der jeweiligen Szenerie. Andererseits steuert die sich bis hin zur Todesdrohung dramatisch zuspitzende Aktion auf eine plötzliche Lösung des Knotens durch das letztlich barmherzige Schicksal und somit auf ein mit reichlich „Felicità“ garniertes glückliches Ende zu.

Der Plot dieser Semiseria ist verwickelt und charakteristisch für eine derartige *pièce à sauvetage*. Zunächst die Vorgeschichte: Herzog Costantino, Sohn von Adolfo, dem Herrscher von Arles in Südfrankreich, wurde fälschlicherweise von Romualdo, einem Verwandten von Adolfo, des Mordes an seinem Vater beschuldigt. Romualdo konnte sich mithin widerrechtlich des Thrones bemächtigen, Costantino musste die Flucht außer Landes ergreifen. Elena, Costantinos Gemahlin und Prinzessin von Tarascón, war als Mann verkleidet getrennt von ihrem Gatten geflohen und kam schließlich zum Anwesen des neapolitanischen Bauern Carlo, der sich vor längerer Zeit mit seiner Tochter Anna und dem Hirten Urbino in der Provence niedergelassen hatte; in dessen Dienste trat sie unter dem Pseudonym Riccardo zusammen mit ihrem Sohn Adolfo (dessen Deckname Paolino ist). Inzwischen ist der Usurpator gestorben, gestand seinem Sohn und Thronfolger Edmondo aber noch sein Verbrechen. Der 1. Akt beginnt damit, dass Carlo Zweifel an Elenas Identität hegt und schließlich die Wahrheit herausfindet. Costantino, seiner langen Verbannung müde, kehrt nach Tarascón zurück, um Nachricht über seine Gattin

zu erhalten. Er begegnet zufällig Carlo, der seine Identität errät; das Gerücht, der Verbannte sei anwesend, macht die Runde. Elena und Costantino treffen einander und werden an Edmondos Häscher ausgeliefert. Der Gouverneur und das Volk fordern den Tod der beiden, während Carlo sich vergeblich bemüht, sie aus ihrer misslichen Lage zu befreien. Zu Beginn des 2. Aktes ist Edmondo hin- und hergerissen: Auf der einen Seite droht die Schande wegen des von Romualdo begangenen Verbrechens, auf der anderen Seite sieht er die Notwendigkeit, Costantino Gerechtigkeit widerfahren zu lassen. Die Eheleute und ihr Sohn werden entdeckt und vor Gericht gebracht. Inzwischen gibt Edmondo aber seine Loyalität zu seinem verstorbenen Vater auf und tut das Verbrechen sowie Costantinos Unschuld kund. Alle nehmen die Nachricht mit Freuden auf und anerkennen den großen Mut, der Edmondo zur Gerechtigkeit verholfen hat.

Trotz mancher Unkenrufe vonseiten der Kritik war das Werk sehr erfolgreich und erlebte allein in Mailand insgesamt an die vierzig Aufführungen. Sowohl das in Neapel sehr bekannte Sängersenble – Margherita Chabrand (Elena, Sopran), Felice Pellegrini (Costantino, Bass), Antonino Casaccia (Adolfo/Paolino, Sopran), Savino Monelli (Edmondo, Tenor), Carlo Maranzato (Gouverneur von Arles; Tenor), der berühmte Bassbuffo Carlo Casaccia (Carlo, Bass), Francesca Checcherini (Anna, seine Tochter, Mezzosopran), Paolina Potenza (Ernesta, seine Tochter, Sopran), Giovanni Pace (Urbino, Schäfer in Carlos Diensten; Bass) – als auch der Komponist wurden mehrfach vor den Vorhang gerufen. In Mailand ist diese Ehre freilich nur dem Sängersenble – Giuseppina Fabbre (Elena), Ranieri Remorini (Costantino), Carolina Pedrotti (Adolfo), Claudio Bonoldi (Edmondo), Giovanni Antonio Biscottini (Gouverneur), Nicola Bassi (Carlo), Orsola Fei (Anna), Carolina Ghiappa (Ernesta), Luigi Picchi (Urbino)

– zuteilgeworden, weil, wie ein zeitgenössischer Bericht verrät, Mayr nur inkognito die Scala besuchte.

„Die erste Oper dieser Stagione war eine, vor zwey Jahren vom Hrn. Kapellm. Sim. Mayer in Neapel componirte opera semiseria, *Elena e Constantino*. Sie hat eine angenehme Musik und gefiel hier in Mayland“, schrieb die Leipziger *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* anlässlich der Herbstsaison 1816 der Mailänder Scala. Allenthalben hob man die Paradenummer der Oper, das Sextett im zweiten Akt, hervor; der französische Kritiker und Schriftsteller Stendhal – eig. Marie-Henri Beyle, intimer Kenner der italienischen Opernszene jener Zeit und früher Biograph Rossinis – berichtete darüber, dass man von weither gereist kam, um dieses „morceau de génie“ zu hören. Dies ließ selbst Goethe darauf aufmerksam werden, so dass er sich von seinem Freund Zelter die Noten besorgen ließ.

Das Werk besteht aus einer Ouvertüre und 16 Musiknummern und wurde in Neapel durch gesprochene Dialoge, in Norditalien durch Secco-Rezitative gegliedert. Mayr verwendet im Formenkanon seiner an der spätneapolitanischen Oper und der Wiener Klassik geschulten Musiksprache Chor und Rezitativ zum Aufbau und Fortgang der dramatischen Handlung und setzt lyrische Haltepunkte mit Arien, Romanzen und Ensembles. Das Finale I ist das umfangreichste Stück und weist etliche eng ineinander verzahnte Abschnitte auf, die den *colpo di scena* vorbereiten und vor allem in Elenas Gesangspart die ins Extrem gesteigerte Dramatik zum Ausdruck bringen. Das vielgerühmte Sextett gegen Ende des zweiten Akts lässt mit seinem melancholischen Largo-Mittelsatz nochmals die Empfindungen und Gefühle der Protagonisten über einfachen Streicher-Pizzikati verströmen. Es mündet schließlich in die finale „Felicità“ eines kurzen Vaudeville-Satzes, womit sich der positive Gesamteindruck dieser herausragenden Oper aus Mayrs Reifezeit abrundet.

Thomas Lindner

Handlung

Erster Akt

[2] Zwei Bauern drehen an einem Schleifrad und schärfen Sensen. Das Rad als Symbol: Wer zuerst aufsteigt, der steigt rasch ab, wer auf dem Boden liegt, der steigt auf. Urbino, Schäfer in den Diensten des Großbauern Carlo, zankt und neckt sich mit Anna und Ernesta, beide Töchter von Carlo.

[3] Urbino scheint eifersüchtig auf den neu angekommenen Fremdling Riccardo, den er für einen Rivalen hält. Bei Carlo, sagt er, will er sich über die frechen Töchter beschweren.

[4] Urbino stellt in der Arie sein Ansehen, seine Bildung und sein Talent heraus.

[5] Anna gibt Urbinos Beschwerde beim Vater keinen Erfolg.

[6] Carlo präsentiert sich als lebenslustiger Neapolitaner, auch finanzielle Schwierigkeiten und Ungemach können seine Lebensfreude und seine Lust am Gesang nicht trüben.

[7] Anna und Ernesta beklagen sich bei ihrem Vater über Urbinos lose Rede. Carlo freilich hat bereits erkannt, dass Riccardo trotz der männlichen Verkleidung in Wirklichkeit eine Frau ist. Er will der seltsamen Geschichte auf den Grund gehen.

[8] Carlo und Riccardo treffen sich. Riccardo antwortet zunächst ausweichend, Carlo verspürt Mitleid.

[9] Riccardo gibt sich zu erkennen: Sie sei Elena, Prinzessin zu Tarascon, und Gattin des Grafen Costantino. Costantino stehe im Verdacht, seinen Vater auf der Jagd getötet zu haben. Um den Häschern zu entkommen, seien Elena und Costantino auf der Flucht, allerdings hätten sie sich getrennt, um rascher voran zu kommen. Das Kind Paolino habe sie vor Carlos Anwesen ausgesetzt. Carlo hatte den Jungen vor drei Jahren gefunden und wie einen Sohn angenommen. Da erscheint Urbino: Der Gouverneur suche nach Fremden, die sich versteckt hielten. Er habe deshalb Paolino gemeldet.

[10] Anna widersetzt sich energisch den Heiratsgelüsten Urbinos: „Tristo uccello di rapina“ – „Böser Raubvogel“.

[11] Paulino will von Riccardo die „Geschichte von dem Mann aus der Provence“ hören.

[12] In der Romance erzählt Riccardo märchenhaft das eigene Schicksal. Paolino hört aufmerksam zu.

[13] Costantino hat sich mittlerweile unerkannt als Mäher unter das Gesinde gemischt. Alle besingen das Landleben und die Liebe.

[14] Costantino ahnt offenbar nicht, wie nahe er seiner Familie ist. Er ist verzweifelt: „Nicht weit von hier verlor ich euch, als ich vor meinen Verfolgern flüchtete“.

[15] Carlo kümmert sich um Costantino, eine Ahnung steigt in ihm hoch. Carlo ruft Riccardo.

[16] Im Terzett feiern Costantino und Riccardo ihr Wiedersehen.

[17] Costantino berichtet: Romualdo, der tückische Usurpator seiner Rechte, sei nun gestorben, allerdings hege dessen Sohn und Nachfolger Edmondo offenbar dieselbe Gesinnung. Urbino kommt dazu. Er will Riccardo, den vermeintlichen Nebenbuhler, aus dem Haus weisen.

[18] Costantino ist bereits wieder auf der Flucht, bevor der Gouverneur erscheint. Der verhört die Anwesenden, erkennt in Paolino den Sohn von Costantino und will ihn verhaften. Nun tritt Elena hervor und gibt sich zu erkennen. Auch Elena und Carlo werden nun verhaftet.

Zweiter Akt

[19] Anna, Ernesta, auch Urbino wollen sich bei Graf Edmondo für Carlo einsetzen

[20] Vorwürfe der beiden Schwestern gegen den furchtsamen Urbino. Der erwidert, vor Gefahren suche er stets zu fliehen, die eigene Haut sei ihm lieb und teuer.

[21] Der Gouverneur läßt ein Blatt mit einer Nachricht an Edmondo überbringen, die Sache eile. Die Töchter und Urbino sollten versuchen, Carlo in den umliegenden Wäldern aufzuspüren. Edmondo scheint unglücklich mit der Entwicklung.

22 Edmondo wendet sich im Monolog gegen die „unheilvolle Ehrsucht“, die Böses bewirkt habe. Die Wächter melden, Elena und Paolino seien in Edmondos Gewalt.

23 Edmondo will das Geheimnis enthüllen, Carlo solle kommen.

24 Carlos ausweichende Antworten befriedigen Edmondo nicht. Der Gouverneur fordert die Sühne des Verbrechens und den Tod von Costantino.

25 Der Gouverneur schlägt Edmondo eine List vor, nämlich Carlo und Elena freizulassen und dann heimlich zu beobachten.

26 Nochmals der Gouverneur: Milde sei nicht angemessen, der Mörder solle die Untat nicht überleben.

27 Carlo, Elena und Adolfo alias Paolino, allein wartend. Edmondo belauscht die Unterhaltung. Als Carlo erwähnt, Costantino sei in den nahen Wald geflohen, tritt Edmondo plötzlich dazu.

28 Edmondos Nachfragen zeigen keinen Erfolg. Deshalb droht er, das Kind zu töten.

29 Elena ist bereit, ebenfalls in den Tod zu gehen.

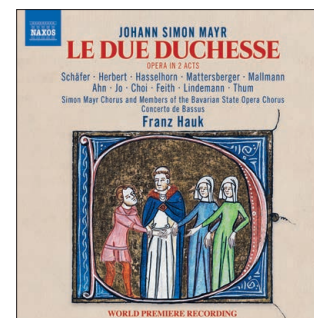
30 Gouverneur und Volk fordern die Todesstrafe. Da taucht plötzlich Costantino auf, beteuert seine Unschuld und will sein Schicksal annehmen. Angst und Schrecken gehen um.

31 Etwas Unerwartetes geschieht: Edmondo ruft seine Wächter vor die Türe. Er bittet um Vertraulichkeit. Im kleinen Kreise bestätigt er die Unschuld von Costantino: Edmondos Vater Romualdo habe seinem Sohn auf dem Totenbett ein Schreiben hinterlassen, er selbst, Romualdo, habe Adolfo, den Vater von Costantino umgebracht.

32 Alle loben das glückliche Ende und Elena & Costantino. Der wahre Mörder wird öffentlich nicht genannt.

Franz Hauk

Also available



8.660422-23



8.660388-89



8.660399-400



8.574203

During the 1813–14 carnival season in Naples, Simon Mayr wrote a much-admired *opera semiseria* called *Elena*. The post-revolutionary Napoleonic era saw great enthusiasm for the rescue opera genre and *Elena* is a perfect example, in which a complex plot, based on French models, sees an innocent falsely accused of a capital offence. Mayr's subtle accommodation of Neapolitan opera and Viennese Classicism ensures a series of choruses and recitatives that drive the action forward, punctuated with arias, romances, ensembles, lyric richness and moments of witty *buffo* colour.

Playing Time
2h 31:03



Johann Simon
MAYR

(1763–1845)

Elena

Opera semiseria in two acts (1814)
Libretto by Andrea Leone Tottola (?–1831)
Sung in Italian



Gefördert von
Margarete Baronin
de Bassus.



Elena / Riccardo Julia Sophie Wagner, Soprano
Costantino Daniel Ochoa, Bass
Paolino / Adolfo Mira Graczyk, Soprano
Carlo Niklas Mallmann, Bass
Edmondo Markus Schäfer, Tenor
Anna Anna-Doris Capitelli, Mezzo-soprano
Ernesta Anna Feith, Soprano
Governor Fang Zhi, Tenor
Herald Harald Thum, Tenor
Urbino Andreas Mattersberger, Bass

Simon Mayr Chorus
Concerto de Bassus (Theona Gubba-Chkheidze, Concertmaster)
Franz Hauk

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet, and the Italian libretto, together with a German translation, may be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/660462.htm

Recorded: 17–25 August 2018 at the Kongregationssaal, Neuburg an der Donau, Bavaria, Germany

Producer, engineer and editor: Sebastian Riederer • Booklet notes: Thomas Lindner

Critical edition: Franz Hauk, Manfred Höbl and Diemut Hauk (assistant) • Event Management: Michaela Mirlach-Geyer

Sponsor: Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Monaco di Baviera • Publisher: Simon Mayr Chorus • Cover photo: G. Paolo Zeccara, Italy