



**PUCCINI**

**Messa di Gloria**  
**Capriccio sinfonico**

**Alejandro Del Angel**  
**Massimo Cavalletti**

**Aalto Theatre Opera Chorus**  
**Essen Philharmonic Choir**  
**Essen Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Andrea Sanguineti**



**Giacomo**  
**PUCCINI**  
(1858–1924)

- |           |   |       |
|-----------|---|-------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Preludio a orchestra, SC 1</b> (1876)  | 3:30  |
|           | <b>Messa a quattro voci con orchestra ‘Messa di Gloria’, SC 6</b> (1880)<br>Text: Ordinary of the Latin Mass  |       |
| <b>2</b>  | Kyrie   | 5:03  |
| <b>3</b>  | Gloria: Gloria in excelsis Deo – Laudamus te  | 4:18  |
| <b>4</b>  | Gloria: Gratias agimus tibi – Gloria in excelsis Deo – Dominus Deus   | 4:45  |
| <b>5</b>  | Gloria: Qui tollis peccata mundi  | 3:44  |
| <b>6</b>  | Gloria: Quoniam tu solus Sanctus  | 1:09  |
| <b>7</b>  | Gloria: Cum Sancto Spiritu  | 3:57  |
| <b>8</b>  | Credo: Credo in unum Deum   | 2:50  |
| <b>9</b>  | Credo: Et incarnatus est  | 2:30  |
| <b>10</b> | Credo: Crucifixus etiam pro nobis   | 2:34  |
| <b>11</b> | Credo: Et resurrexit – Et in Spiritum Sanctum – Et unam sanctam –<br>Et vitam venturi saeculi   | 6:26  |
| <b>12</b> | Sanctus   | 1:18  |
| <b>13</b> | Benedictus  | 2:12  |
| <b>14</b> | Agnus Dei   | 2:16  |
| <b>15</b> | <b>Scherzo in A minor, SC 34 – Trio in F major, SC 52</b> (1882/83)<br>(orchestration completed by Virgilio Bernardoni [b. 1958])   | 3:05  |
| <b>16</b> | <b>Capriccio sinfonico, SC 55</b> (1883)  | 13:41 |
| <b>17</b> | <b>Ad una morta, SC 41</b> (1883)<br>(reconstructed by Gabriella Biagi Ravenni [b. 1947] and Dieter Schickling [1939–2023]<br>for baritone and orchestra, ed. Virgilio Bernardoni, 2014)<br>Text: Antonio Ghislanzoni (1824–1893) | 3:24  |

- 18** **String Quartet in D major – IV. Allegro vivo** (c. 1883) 5:20  
 (reconstructed by Wolfgang Ludewig [1926–2017] as  
**Scherzo for String Orchestra, SC 56**, ed. Dieter Schickling, 2001)
- 19** **Inno a Roma, SC 90** (1919) 3:16  
 (arr. Nuccio Fiorda [1894–1975] for choir and orchestra, 1929)  
 Text: Fausto Salvatori (1870–1929)

**Alejandro Del Angel, Tenor** **4** **9** **14**  
**Massimo Cavalletti, Baritone** **13** **17**, **Bass** **10** **14**

**Aalto Theatre Opera Chorus** **2–9** **11–14** **19**  
**Essen Philharmonic Choir** **2–9** **11–14** **19**

**Essen Philharmonic Orchestra**  
**Andrea Sanguineti**

## **Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924)**

### **Messa di Gloria • Capriccio sinfonico • Rarities**

Giacomo Puccini was born in 1858 in the Italian city of Lucca, where his ancestors had worked as musicians for several generations. Setting out to follow in the family tradition he studied first at the music school in Lucca. Then, in 1880, he moved to Milan to take up a place at the Conservatory and pursue the dream he had cherished since hearing *Aida* in Pisa in 1876 – that of becoming an opera composer. He built on the success of his first stage work, *Le villi* (1884), and made his name across Europe with *Manon Lescaut*, premiered in Turin in 1893. Two years before this, he had moved to the small town of Torre del Lago (about ten miles from Lucca), and it was here that most of his operas were composed. After *Manon*, he worked with librettists Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica to produce *La Bohème* (1896), *Tosca* (1900) and *Madama Butterfly* (1904). *La Bohème*, despite a lukewarm reception at its premiere, soon became a worldwide hit, and his next opera, *La fanciulla del West*, enjoyed its world premiere at The Metropolitan Opera, New York (1910). In 1921 Puccini moved to a villa he had had built in Viareggio, just north of Torre del Lago. He died on 29 November 1924 after an operation to treat the cancer from which he was suffering. His final opera, *Turandot*, was left unfinished. At the request of his son, Puccini's body was laid to rest in a chapel built at the family's former home in Torre del Lago, now preserved as the Villa Puccini, a museum dedicated to the composer. As well as having been renamed Torre del Lago Puccini, since 1930 the town has been a kind of Italian Bayreuth, hosting an annual festival devoted solely to the works of the composer whose name it has adopted. All of Puccini's works, even his purely instrumental scores, are striking for their theatricality – his music being characterised by a blend of melodic writing designed for its dramatic impact and the latest harmonic developments of the post-Romantic period.

## Unfamiliar Puccini: Beyond the Opera House

The works on this album reveal a little-known aspect of Giacomo Puccini's output, namely his instrumental and sacred music. With the exception of the *Inno a Roma*, we are talking about early compositions (including a number of examination pieces from his student years), some of which have been reconstructed or completed, with great care and patience, by musicologists such as Dieter Schickling and Virgilio Bernardoni. They offer invaluable insights into the tastes, influences and training of the man who went on to achieve global fame as an opera composer, demonstrating how confident and comfortable he was as a symphonist, with a gift for orchestration and harmonic experimentation. Far from being abandoned when Puccini began focusing almost exclusively on the stage, these traits found a new incarnation in his operatic writing. Puccini is well known for his habit of recycling material, something he did not simply for reasons of self-borrowing, but as a way of exploring the various possibilities suggested by a single idea – a process that sheds light on his compositional process. Listeners should not therefore be surprised if they pick out the occasional familiar motif in the works presented here.

In order to understand the genesis of these compositions and set them in context, it is worth recalling some of the details of Puccini's early life. For although his very name instantly calls to mind a string of hugely memorable arias from operas that have enjoyed global popularity for more than a century, he originally seemed destined for other musical endeavours. Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria (to give him his full name) was born on 22 December 1858 in the city of Lucca, where by then several generations of Puccinis had served as musical directors of the cathedral. When Giacomo's father Michele died, the official documentation of 18 February 1864 appointing Michele's brother Fortunato Magi as his successor stipulated that he would vacate the role for 'Signor Giacomo' as soon as the then five-year-old boy was old enough to take his place.

Like his forebears before him, young Giacomo therefore began to learn the organ and study the scores housed in parish archives, contributing to the family coffers from an early age as an altar boy and then, from 14, as the salaried organist at the Church of the Confraternita di San Girolamo. He also attended the Istituto Musicale Pacini, where he was taught by his uncle and by Carlo Angeloni. Legend has it that as a boy Puccini was a bit of a tearaway, resistant to discipline, not especially talented or inclined to study. In reality, though, most of this criticism came from Fortunato Magi who, of course, was living in constant fear of losing his living to his nephew. All other sources of information about Puccini's years of study in Lucca attest to his gift for melody and his interest in harmonic exploration. However, although he seemed set for a future as a church musician, he had a road to Damascus moment at the age of 17: in spring 1876 he walked from Lucca to Pisa, a journey of about twelve miles, to attend a performance of *Aida*. Even though he had to stand as he could not afford the price of a seat, by the time he got home he had made up his mind to become an opera composer.

The determination, ambition and tenacity with which Puccini overcame hardship and poverty to pursue his dream are now all part of his hagiography. They are also portrayed with extraordinary verisimilitude in *La Bohème*, an opera by a composer with first-hand experience of the bohemian life.

It was in that same year of 1876 that Puccini composed the *Preludio a orchestra* ('Orchestral Prelude'), whose score is dated 5 August. We knew of this piece's existence through fragments, but the manuscript containing the almost complete version was only discovered in the Puccini Archive in Torre del Lago relatively recently – and made public in 1999. A short piece in E major, with an introduction in E minor, the *Preludio* is based primarily on the manipulation of a single main theme, which undergoes a series of different variations. Despite Puccini's youth at the time he wrote the prelude, we can already hear some of the distinctive features of his maturity: a facility for writing memorable melodies, a liking for restless harmonies, and an attention to his orchestral palette, as shown by the inclusion here of a part for ophicleide (an instrument made famous by Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, but which was also used by Rossini, Verdi and Wagner). The use of orchestral colour to accentuate a particular emotional state would become one of the hallmarks of his work.

To pursue his dream of writing for the opera house Puccini applied to Lucca's municipal authorities (who years earlier had been at such pains to secure his future) for a scholarship to study in Milan. This was not forthcoming, so he remained in Lucca, and in 1880 completed his studies at the Istituto Pacini with a substantial examination piece that was very much in the Puccini family tradition: the *Messa a quattro voci con orchestra* ('Four-part Mass with Orchestra'), today rather erroneously known as the 'Messa di Gloria'. Technically speaking, a *missa di gloria* consists of just two movements, a *Kyrie* and a *Gloria*, whereas this Mass also includes a *Credo*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*. The popular title of Puccini's work is linked to its reception history. After its first performance, on 12 August 1880, Puccini decided not to publish his Mass. It then lay neglected until 1951, when Father Dante del Fiorentino, an Italian priest who had known Puccini as a young man and later emigrated to America, returned to Italy to gather material for a Puccini biography and came across a copy of the *Messa* in the collection of documents held by the family of Puccini's friend and factotum Alfredo Vandini. Believing he had found the original manuscript, once back in the US, he had the work published by Mills Music, and it was then performed in Chicago on 12 July 1952 by the Swedish Choral Club, conducted by Alfredo Antonini. As it turned out, Puccini scholars were already aware of the *Messa*, and its US publication led to a dispute with the composer's estate and the Italian publisher Ricordi. This was resolved by an agreement to split the rights, with Ricordi also publishing the work that same year and an Italian performance taking place in Naples in December, courtesy of the Scarlatti Orchestra and Chorus.

Both the legend surrounding the score's rediscovery and its change of title can be traced back to the version published in the US and the programme notes written for the Chicago performance. The choice of title probably stemmed from the fact that the *Gloria* is by far the most extensive movement – almost as long as the rest of the movements put together. The music of this four-part Mass is theatrical and eclectic, as was characteristic of Italian sacred music in the latter half of the 19th century, a time at which it was clearly influenced by operatic singing.

Puccini was often criticised for the freedom with which, in his organ improvisations, he used operatic motifs and styles deemed unsuitable for a liturgical context. In his Mass, however, the vocal writing is perfectly in line with the contrapuntal tradition of Palestrina as taught in Italy's music schools and conservatories; indeed the *Kyrie* is decidedly conventional with its imitative vocal writing and A–B–A structure for the three statements of the text. It is in the imposing *Gloria* that the young Puccini showcases his many gifts, and the various influences of his student years. The spirited opening theme – especially with its inclusion of brass fanfares – was considered inappropriate for church usage; here, though, there is a little of everything, as the atmosphere changes time and time again as the movement goes on. The 'Et in terra pax' section is much more intimate, while the 'Gratias agimus' is effectively a tenor aria in which the operatic influence comes to the fore; the 'Quoniam tu solus Sanctus' is a chorale; and the 'Cum Sancto Spiritu', which one local critic called 'a first-rate grand fugue', a display of contrapuntal virtuosity as good as anything by Bach or Mendelssohn. The bold chromaticism towards the end of the *Gloria*, meanwhile, offers a glimpse of the attraction Puccini would develop for Wagner's music in subsequent years.

The *Credo* in C minor is the longest movement after the *Gloria*, perhaps because it was originally conceived in 1878 as a stand-alone piece and then incorporated into the Mass, a *modus operandi* that remained a constant in the composer's career. Many influences are discernible here, but so too are many traditional elements of the Mass. Take, for example, the emphasis placed on the 'Et incarnatus est', an aria in G major for tenor and chorus, which dramatises one of the central points of the Latin Mass, God's incarnation as man, while his death on the cross is accompanied by a funeral march in the parallel key of G minor, underlining the symbolic quality of the minor mode as a place of mourning, before, logically enough, the resurrection ('Et resurrexit') is heralded by brass fanfares.

The *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei* movements are much shorter, serving to round off the work – together with the *Kyrie* they act almost as a frame for the two central sections. The writing becomes less dense, and there is even room for a duet between tenor and baritone as Puccini, with something of a plot twist, brings his Mass to a peaceful end with a light, waltz-like

movement. He later reused some of the music from the *Agnus Dei* in the aria 'Sulla vetta tu del monte' from Act II of *Manon Lescaut*. As for the *Messa*, a work of such substance could have launched him on the path of his ancestors, but instead it marked his farewell to any such ambition. Having finally obtained a modest bursary of one hundred lira – thanks to the intervention of his mother, who had approached Queen Margherita for help, describing herself as a 'poor widow' – Puccini moved to Milan. He had no trouble passing the entrance exam for the Conservatory and, from 1880, studied there with Antonio Bazzini and Amilcare Ponchielli.

Given Puccini's practice of reworking his compositions, recycling the same material for different pieces by changing the instrumentation or simply by modifying a few details, and the fact that he had to make alterations for particular performances or stagings, scholars seeking to reconstruct his original intentions have their work cut out for them. This is even more true of his early compositions because many of them are, essentially, works in progress and have to be considered as such. The two *Scherzos* that feature on this album are cases in point. Both have been reconstructed and almost certainly started life as part of the same work – a string quartet. We know from a letter from Puccini to his mother that one of the tasks assigned to him by Bazzini during his first years in Milan was that of writing a string quartet, but he had definitely tried his hand at the genre before that. In 1991, Sotheby's sold at auction the title page of a string quartet in D signed by Puccini and dated 1882. The individual parts for the first movement have survived, making it possible to reconstruct this in more or less its original form. The rest is based on conjecture. According to the experts, this quartet also comprises the following: a second-movement *Adagio* in A major, which has survived in a version for piano, or rather with the four parts split between two staves; the *Scherzo* in A minor published by Pietro Spada in 1985 without a trio; and a *Trio* now identified, on the basis of solid documentary evidence, as the *Trio in F major*, SC52, heard here in the orchestration completed by Virgilio Bernardoni (included in vol. II/1 of the *Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Giacomo Puccini*) and paired with Puccini's own orchestration of the *Scherzo* in A minor.

The string quartet's finale, meanwhile, would appear to have been the *Scherzo in D minor*, SC56, known to us via a reduction for piano four hands realised by the composer's brother Michele and dated October–November 1883. Wolfgang Ludwig then reconstructed this movement to create the *Scherzo for Strings*, which was first performed in 2001. While it has the character of a *scherzo* (driving energy and ternary rhythm), its title does rather strangely suggest that the original string quartet had two *scherzos*. It might, however, be a reference to Verdi's more or less contemporaneous *String Quartet*, which had sparked great interest in musical circles: its final movement is headed *Scherzo Fuga, Allegro assai mosso* and follows a *Prestissimo* third movement which has all the traits of a *scherzo*. Whatever Puccini's intentions may have been, it is more than plausible that this movement could have been the finale of his quartet, not least because the music is not in conventional tripartite form, but unfolds in a continuous flow in which appearances of the main theme and secondary episodes emerge one after the other in sections clearly differentiated by changes of key, often related by thirds, a process inherited from the chamber tradition of Beethoven and Schubert.

The *Capriccio sinfonico* was written as a graduation piece and so successfully performed under the baton of Franco Faccio in 1883 that the famous conductor expressed his intention to perform it again. In a well-known article published in the 15 July 1883 edition of the newspaper *La Perseveranza* (i.e. the day after that first performance), critic Filippo Filippi, a great supporter of German music, praised the work's symphonic and structural qualities, predicting a bright future for Puccini as a composer of orchestral music.

Conceived for large orchestra, with a substantial wind section (the brass section alone includes four horns, trumpets, trombones, cornet and ophicleide) that speaks of Puccini's admiration for Wagner and German orchestral writing in general, the *Capriccio* is very reminiscent of a symphonic poem in tripartite and cyclic form. The opening *Andante moderato* acts as a prelude to the central section, in rapid ternary rhythm, and then returns in varied and expanded form, before the atmospheric *pianissimo* coda. In the development section, the themes intertwine and appear in different forms each time they return.

The results are striking, in terms of both the inventive and robust structure created and the rich instrumentation used, and we can also hear Puccini's mastery of the contrapuntal techniques he employed so extensively in his youth in Lucca. In short, it seems to have all the ingredients to impress the examiners judging a candidate completing his demanding studies in composition. The young composer could be thought to be slightly gilding the lily here, but it is a remarkable work and, above all, one in which we can already hear all the qualities of the mature Puccini, with his gift for combining sweeping melodies with the rich orchestration and advanced harmonies of Wagnerian opera.

After its first performances as part of the Conservatory graduation concerts, the *Capriccio* enjoyed at least two more, in Turin, in 1884. Puccini made the most of the opportunity and incorporated a number of revisions into the work. That same year it was published in a version for piano four hands; after that, certain elements, as per Puccini's custom, reappeared in other works. Given the abundance of material here, it is not surprising to discover that Puccini called on it for *Le villi* and *Edgar* (whose funeral scene features two themes from the *Andante*) and, above all, reused the opening theme of the *Allegro vivace* almost verbatim at the start of Acts I and IV of *La Bohème*. Furthermore, he reworked the *Capriccio* itself again in 1893 for a performance in Venice on 9 April, adding the two cornets and the bass drum. There are no other documented performances after this, and the *Capriccio* only returned to the concert hall after Pietro Spada's edition of the orchestral score was published in 1978. However, the numerous corrections made over the years led to subsequent critical editions – one realised by Marcello Panni and two by Dieter Schickling, the first in 2006, the second in 2015 (see vol. II/1 of the *Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Giacomo Puccini*), which take Puccini's revisions to his early score into account.

It was also Dieter Schickling, in partnership with Gabriella Biagi Ravenni, who reconstructed *Ad una morta* ('To a dead soul') from the sources. This elegiac aria was written in 1883 to a text by *Aida* librettist Antonio Ghislanzoni and anticipates Puccini's later fascination with death (almost all his operatic heroines are doomed to die). Again the music was reused – in *Le villi*, *Edgar* and the *Capriccio sinfonico*. There are two versions, one for mezzo-soprano or baritone and piano, and one for baritone and orchestra. The former achieved fame under the title *Spirto gentil* (recorded by Plácido Domingo in 1989). The orchestral version, first performed in 2014, adds greater drama to the aria, an early example of Puccini's mournful melodic vein. He went on to excel at creating climactic moments in his arias, gradually building up the tension in order to provoke an emotional response from the listener – as this work shows, he was clearly well on his way to mastering this technique by the time he graduated from the Conservatory.

The only work from Puccini's mature period on this album is the *Inno a Roma* ('Hymn to Rome'), which sets a text by poet Fausto Salvatori and bears a dedication reading 'to Her Royal Highness Princess Jolanda of Savoy'. Once very popular, it fell into neglect after acquiring unintended associations with the rhetoric of the Fascist regime, which took ownership of the work and turned it virtually into a second national anthem. The *Inno* would seem to suggest that Puccini was a supporter of nationalist ideas. A self-proclaimed Germanophile, he notoriously had little time for parliamentary democracy, on the subject of which he once told his friend Guido Marotti, 'I don't believe it's possible to educate the masses. It's the same as using a basket to try and draw water from a well!' This is not to say, however, that he became a supporter of the Fascist Party.

An examination of the genesis of this work shows in fact how, for chronological if no other reasons, its 'fascistification' was an entirely arbitrary process. In April 1918 – in other words, some years before the Fascists came to power – the mayor of Rome, Prospero Colonna, who had been in favour of Italy's entry into the First World War, commissioned Salvatori to write an ode to commemorate both the nation's wartime victories and the founding of Rome itself (long since – and still – marked by an annual festival on 21 April known as the Natale di Roma). Salvatori took inspiration from Horace's *Carmen saeculare*, a poem celebrating Rome's hegemony over the world. The work's gestation was complicated by the demands of the civic authorities, who had two performances in mind, one in the open air with a children's choir, one in a theatre with a semi-professional choir. In addition to this, Puccini was not satisfied with the text and asked Salvatori to rewrite it. Despite all these difficulties, by

28 May a version for voice and piano was ready – Puccini sent it both to Colonna and to Alessandro Vessella, who arranged it for the well-known wind band of which he was the conductor. The *Inno a Roma* was also orchestrated, by Nuccio Fiorda, and it is that version that has been recorded for this album.

It was decided that the first performance would take place on 21 April 1920 as part of that year's Natale di Roma celebrations. Puccini had intended it to be performed at the Teatro Costanzi, as a prelude to a staging of *Aida*, but a strike by the orchestral musicians (which also thwarted the performance of the opera) forced a change of venue to the Piazza di Siena, in the Villa Borghese gardens, where the royal family would be among the audience. Fate, however, seemed determined that the *Inno* should not be heard that day – Rome was hit by a huge storm and the premiere was postponed until 1 June, when it finally took place, to great acclaim, as part of a sporting event held at the Stadio Nazionale. Then, as referenced above, it was adopted by the Fascist regime and gained popularity as a staple of official ceremonies. After the Second World War, the far-right MSI (Italian Social Movement), which saw itself as the heir to the now-dissolved Fascist Party, felt entitled to keep the work as its anthem, condemning it to be later erased from history.

It is difficult, therefore, to separate the *Inno a Roma* from the political context with which it became associated and see it for what it is, a celebratory occasional piece. Incidentally, Puccini himself was not that fond of it, describing it in a letter to his wife Elvira as 'a fine bit of rubbish'. Despite its creator's unflattering opinion, the *Inno* has plenty of the melodic flourishes characteristic of Puccini the great opera composer, with his talent for rousing an audience – and his music certainly transcends a text which now, over a century later, sounds somewhat overly grandiloquent in tone.

**Tommaso Manera**

*English translation: Susannah Howe*



Photo © Benne Ochs

### **Alejandro Del Angel**

Mexican tenor Alejandro Del Angel studied at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música in Mexico, and was a member of the SIVAM opera studio and the Ópera de Bellas Artes Studio of the Opera National de México. He was a member of the International Opera Studio at the Opernhaus Zürich during the 2021/22 and 2022/23 seasons. He won First Prize at the 11th International Singing Competition of Sinaloa, was the District Winner of the 2021 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in Kansas, and received Third Prize at the 2022 Stanisław Moniuszko International Vocal Competition in Poland. He has been an ensemble member of the Aalto Musiktheater since the 2023/24 season, where he has performed roles such as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, Macduff in *Macbeth*, Gennaro in *Lucrezia Borgia* and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*.



Photo © Teresa Rothwang

### **Massimo Cavalletti**

Italian baritone Massimo Cavalletti regularly appears at renowned opera houses and international festivals. Since his operatic debut in 2004 in *Parisina* at the Teatro Donizetti (an Accademia Teatro alla Scala production), he has established an ongoing collaboration with the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. In 2007 he worked closely with Oper Zürich, appearing in *La Bohème*, *La Juive* and *Don Carlos*, among others. He has also interpreted the roles of Marcello (*La Bohème*) at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Schaunard (*La Bohème*), Lord Enrico Ashton (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) and Lescaut (*Manon Lescaut*) at The Metropolitan Opera; Escamillo (*Carmen*) at the Wiener Staatsoper and the Gran Teatre del Liceu; and has appeared across Europe, including at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opéra de Monte-Carlo, Salzburger Festspiele, Glyndebourne Festival and Macerata Opera Festival, as well as with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. At the Aalto Musiktheater he has appeared in the title role in Verdi's *Macbeth*, and Don Carlo in *La forza del destino*. [www.massimocavalletti.com](http://www.massimocavalletti.com)



### **Aalto Theatre Opera Chorus**

The Aalto Theatre Opera Chorus has existed since the opening of the Stadttheater in 1892 (now the Grillo Theatre). It originally consisted of six men and eight women, and today has over 50 members. Following a formative collaboration between choral directors Konrad Haenisch and Alexander Eberle, Jens Bingert served as director from the 2016/17 season until the end of the 2021/22 season. Klaas-Jan de Groot has been director since the 2022/23 season, with Patrick Jaskolka serving as deputy, as he was under Jens Bingert. The professionally trained singers from 15 nations

not only perform on the opera stage, but also in symphonic and special concerts.

[www.theater-essen.de/musiktheater/aalto-opernchor/](http://www.theater-essen.de/musiktheater/aalto-opernchor/)



### **Essen Philharmonic Choir**

'I didn't even compose the piece as beautifully as the Esseners sang it,' stated Johannes Brahms in 1885 about the performance of his motet *O Heiland, reiß die Himmel auf* by what was then the Gesangs-Musikverein. Patrick Jaskolka, who has directed the choir since 2016, aims to maintain this high level of performance. Founded in 1838, the choir is considered to be the oldest artistic association in the city of Essen, and is an important part of cultural life in the Ruhr region. The Essen Philharmonic Choir regularly participates in choral concerts with the Essen Philharmonic

Orchestra, as well as giving its own concerts, including guest appearances in neighbouring cities in the Ruhr area and the Rhineland. [www.philharmonischerchor-essen.de](http://www.philharmonischerchor-essen.de)



Photo © Volker Wiciak

### **Essen Philharmonic Orchestra**

The Essen Philharmonic Orchestra is the symphony and opera orchestra of the city of Essen, and also enjoys an excellent international reputation thanks to regular guest appearances at Het Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Dvořák Prague Festival and the Richard Strauss Festival in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. The orchestra has also collaborated with eminent guest conductors including Philippe Herreweghe, Thomas Hengelbrock, Jun Märkl, Simone Young, Thomas Guggeis and Cornelius Meister, and soloists such as Rudolf Buchbinder, Frank Peter Zimmermann, Maximilian Hornung,

Julian Rachlin and Gautier Capuçon. In addition to regular opera performances at the Aalto Theatre, the Essen Philharmonic Orchestra performs more than 30 concerts per season at the Philharmonie Essen, including chamber and special concerts. The musicians of the orchestra also put on their own series of chamber concerts in the foyer of the Aalto Theatre and in the Philharmonie, and appear in eclectic performances with guest artists at the KlassikLounge in the Grillo Theatre. The Essen Philharmonic Orchestra is a founding member of the Orchestra of Change initiative, which is committed to sustainable orchestral operations. Andrea Sanguineti is the general music director of the Essen Philharmonic Orchestra.

<https://www.theater-essen.de/philharmoniker>



Photo © Benne Cohns

## **Andrea Sanguineti**

German-Italian conductor Andrea Sanguineti is music director of the Essen Philharmonic Orchestra and the Aalto Theatre in Essen. He has conducted productions at major European opera houses including the Opernhaus Zürich, Oper Köln, Oper Leipzig, Opéra national du Rhin, Opéra de Nice and the Grand Théâtre de Genève. He made his debut at the Sydney Opera House in 2023 with *Roberto Devereux*, and the Savonlinna Opera Festival in 2024 with *Don Giovanni*. In addition to his success in the opera world, Sanguineti has given critically acclaimed performances with the Essen Philharmonic Orchestra, and has also appeared with the Gürzenich Orchester Köln, ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, Radio Filharmonisch Orkest and Orchestra Națională Radio. He regularly collaborates with renowned artists such as Frank Peter Zimmermann, Anna Vinnitskaya, Maria Agresta and Rolando Villazón. After training in Vienna and Milan, Sanguineti began his career as maestro preparatore and then Kapellmeister at the Staatsoper Hannover. In 2011, he was appointed First Kapellmeister at the Mainfranken Theater Würzburg and shortly afterwards music director of the Gerhart-Hauptmann-Theater Görlitz-Zittau, where he served until 2018. [www.andreasanguineti.de](http://www.andreasanguineti.de)

Giacomo Puccini achieved global renown as an opera composer, but the choral, vocal and orchestral works recorded here reveal little-known aspects of his output, including several rarities. Puccini's early training was in church music, with the *Messa di Gloria* a clear indication of his great talent. The recently discovered *Preludio a orchestra* shows his wider ambitions, with the Germanic influences of the *Capriccio sinfonico* resulting in music destined to reappear in operas such as *La Bohème*. The elegiac and prescient aria *Ad una morta* contrasts with the celebratory *Inno a Roma*, a rousing occasional piece that features plenty of Puccini's characteristic melodic flourishes. A digital EP of the *Preludio sinfonico* and the *Requiem* is also available for download and streaming (9.70398)

**Giacomo  
PUCCINI**  
(1858–1924)

**Playing Time**  
**75:36**

- |             |  |           |   |
|-------------|--|-----------|---|
| <b>1</b>    | <b>Preludio a orchestra, SC 1 (1876) 3:30</b>  | <b>17</b> | <b>Ad una morta, SC 41 (1883) 3:24</b><br>(reconstructed by Gabriella Biagi Ravenni and Dieter Schickling for baritone and orchestra, 2014) |
| <b>2–14</b> | <b>Messa a quattro voci con orchestra ‘Messa di Gloria’, SC 6 (1880) 43:02</b>   | <b>18</b> | <b>Scherzo for String Orchestra, SC 56 (c. 1883) 5:20</b><br>(reconstructed by Wolfgang Ludewig, 2001)                                      |
| <b>15</b>   | <b>Scherzo in A minor, SC 34 – Trio in F major, SC 52 (1882/83) 3:05</b><br>(orchestration completed by Virgilio Bernardoni) | <b>19</b> | <b>Inno a Roma, SC 90 (1919) 3:16</b><br>(arr. Nuccio Fiorda for choir and orchestra, 1929)   |
| <b>16</b>   | <b>Capriccio sinfonico, SC 55 (1883) 13:41</b>   |           |   |

**Alejandro Del Angel, Tenor** **4** **9** **14** • **Massimo Cavalletti, Baritone** **13** **17**, **Bass** **10** **14**  
**Aalto Theatre Opera Chorus** **2–9** **11–14** **19** • **Essen Philharmonic Choir** **2–9** **11–14** **19**

**Essen Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Andrea Sanguineti**

**A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet**

Sung texts are included in the booklet and can also be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/574685.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/574685.htm)

Booklet notes in Italian can be found at [www.naxos.com/notes/574685.htm](http://www.naxos.com/notes/574685.htm) • Recorded: 20–22 November 2024 at the Alfried-Krupp-Saal, Philharmonie Essen, Germany • Recording producer, balance engineer and editor: Ingo Schmidt-Lucas

Booklet notes: Tommaso Manera • Cover: Puccini, by Giovanni Zorzoli (1927–2015) after Arturo Rietti (1863–1943)

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