



FILIPPO MARCHETTI (1831-1902)
RUY BLAS

Four acts drama by Carlo d'Ormeville from Victor Hugo

DIMITRA THEODOSSIOU

ALBERTO GAZALE

MARIO MALAGNINI

SYLVIA MARINI

STEFANO CONSOLINI ROBERTO NENCINI

GABRIELE MONICI

ELENA MARINANGELI

ALFIO ROSATI

GIOVANNI BRECCICIAROLI

ORCHESTRA FILARMONICA MARCHIGIANA

CORO LIRICO MARCHIGIANO

"VINCENZO BELLINI"

Conductor: DANIEL LIPTON

Recorded live at the Teatro Pergolesi, Jesi (Ancona) on September 1998

CAT. NO. GB 2237/38-2

FIRST RECORDING

2 CDs x 1

Filippo Marchetti was born on 28 February 1831 in Bolognola, a small town in the Marche Apennine mountains. After having learned the fundamentals of music in his hometown, Marchetti enrolled as a "paying pupil" at the Real Collegio di San Pietro a Majella in Naples. After leaving the Neapolitan conservatory in 1854, the young man immediately set to work composing for the theater.

After *Gentile da Varano*, and *La demente*, (both successfully performed in 1856) Marchetti after some years set to music *Romeo e Giulietta*: the work was a critical success. Yet in 1869, Marchetti's success was finally assured by the collaboration with Carlo D'Ormeville (1840 - 1924), the young but experienced librettist, theatrical agent, founder and director of the widely read *Gazzetta dei Teatri*. D'Ormeville proposed that Marchetti condense into a libretto Victor Hugo's play, *Ruy Blas*, which in 1838 had equaled if not surpassed the memorable and controversial triumph of *Hernani*. Hugo had designed his play around the polemical confrontation between the courage and moral superiority of a young, intelligent and able commoner and the baseness of an arrogant and wicked nobleman. The tragedy, often performed then as now, had also interested Verdi in 1844, who very nearly proposed it twice—in 1857 at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples and again in 1861 at St. Petersburg. The score was accepted by the commission of the Teatro alla Scala and inserted as an "obligatory opera" for the 1868-69 season. The first performance was very favorably reviewed in the 7 April issue of *Il Trovatore*. It claimed, among other things, that "this opera is an exceedingly praiseworthy work, in which good overcomes mediocre; it is a work in which the composer gives promise of great things to come and reveals a studious young man, inventive and passionate, an artist, not a craftsman; not one of those who scribbles notes *currenti calamo*, but a composer who thinks and knows. The music of *Ruy Blas* belongs to a genre which is sentimental, romantic[...] the dialogue is elegant, simple, the proportions are minute, the colors pale [...] Marchetti has not resorted to trivial means to assure success; in his music there is no conventionalism nor vulgar effects of timbre, exaggerated *chiaroscuro*, cunning cadences. Nothing. Because of the demands of the drama, the composer attempted to be true; his opera is in step with the poetry, the dialogue is always simple, the musical numbers follow one after another with admirable unity..."

The extraordinary success of the opera began with the Florentine edition of the same year, 1869. It was performed in all the large and small theaters of Italy, returning year after year to the same venues. In the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, it reached the most distant shores of five continents where there was an opera house or where an Italian opera company happened to tour. *Ruy Blas* was translated into Czech, German, Serbo-Croatian and, naturally, English, and thus became popular in Great Britain and especially in the United States. Countless celebrated singers were more than willing to play the part of Marchetti's characters. It may suffice to list only the most noted singers at the turn of the century: the sopranos Marcella Sembrich, Teresa Stolz, Celestina Boninsegna, Angelo Masini, Julian Gayarre, Bernardo De Muro, Giovanni Martinelli, Victor Maurel, Mattia Battistini, Titta Ruffo, Conchita Supervia.

In the 20th century, there have been at least forty productions. Yet is an uncontested fact that the advent of the French *opéra lyrique* and, later, the "Young Italian School" marked an inevitable change in tastes and tendencies, and *Ruy Blas* and his Queen began the slow decline towards oblivion.