



"V2540. GIANNA PEDERZINI: Songs, Arias & Duet (with Renato Zanelli) by Ala, Alfano, Billi, Bizet, Canaro, Cannio, Cardillo, Chopin/Marbot, Cilea, de Curtis, de Falla, Errico, Giordano, Granados, Lama, Mari, Mascagni, Mozart, Pieraccini, Rossini, Sadero, Schultze, Tagliaferri, Thomas, Tosti, Verdi, A. Williams, plus Brahms & Strauss (the latter two in German). [Not to be missed is the elegant two-volume Pederzini biography in Italian by Maurizio Tiberi, B1861] (Canada) 2-St. Laurent Studio 78-522, recorded 1928-46.

#### CRITIC REVIEW:

"This spectacularly successful set, available from Norbeck, Peters & Ford ([www.norpete.com](http://www.norpete.com)), may serve to introduce all but the most fanatical collectors to a great Italian mezzo-soprano. Gianna Pederzini (1900-1988) had a very successful career for almost four decades, starting in the early 1920s. She chose to focus her life in her native Italy and thus did not gain an international reputation equal to other singers of her caliber. I reviewed a Preiser LP recital in FANFARE 4:1, commenting that while the voice itself is not remarkable, what makes Pederzini stand out is the 'sheer grandness of her singing'. Then, in FANFARE 8:2, Anthony D. Coggi was equally positive about her in reviewing a Timclub LP.

This two-disc collection assembled by Yves St. Laurent (no, not the same person as the designer) is superb. The transfers are clean, pitched properly, and give focus and presence to the voice; the selections span from 1928 to 1946. The range of repertoire in which Pederzini was comfortable is extraordinary. Whether singing Mozart, Rossini, Verdi, the verismo composers or Neapolitan songs, she sounds completely at home. Pederzini was known as an intelligent musician, and she sang in many contemporary works during her career. She treats all of the fluff included here with elegance and respect, uplifting and enhancing even the slightest musical material. One example is 'Ninna Nanna in Grigioverde', also known as 'Canzone di Guerra' composed by Giovanni Militello for the 1941 film L'ANGELO DEL CREPUSCOLO. This song was used by the Mussolini government as a patriotic statement (it was sung in the film by Gigli) and incorporates phrases from 'Taps'. Somehow, Pederzini (who was the mistress of a major Fascist official) makes real music of this.

Most of all, this is singing with a presence, with a face that comes alive in your mind as you listen. Pederzini studied for five years with the great tenor Fernando de Lucia. Lanfranco Rasponi's invaluable THE LAST PRIMA DONNAS [B0195 & B0915], a collection of interviews with important historic opera singers, devotes a chapter to Pederzini, and she says of her studies with de Lucia, 'He taught me not only what singing was all about, but impeccable diction, which he claimed - and how right he was! - made the difference between a singer and an artist'. The crispness of her diction, in whatever language, is a model. You could take dictation from it. In addition, Pederzini has clearly thought about the meaning of the words and the dynamic shading appropriate for each number.

She can sing with melting tenderness ('Ninna nanna istriana' by Geni Sadero), touching sadness (Ralph Marbot's setting of Chopin's 'Tristezza'), and exuberant joy (the Rossini numbers). Her dynamic control and imagination are splendid, as in the gorgeous held final note of 'Catari' (which you might better know as 'Core 'ngrato'). One particularly lovely song, given a beautiful and urgent treatment, is 'Crepusculo triste' by Umberto Giordano. Giordano wrote it in 1904 specifically for the gramophone (intended for mezzo-soprano Nini Frascani), and Pederzini recorded it twice, in 1928 and 1940. Giordano must have been thrilled; he thought so much of her that he offered to transpose the title role of FEDORA for her.

This set contains a good chunk of her Carmen, a role for which she was famous because of her singing, acting, and seductive good looks. The various Don Josés included Gigli, Lauri-Volpi, Merli, Masini, and Vinay, all the way to Corelli! The recording of the final scene here, with Renato Zanelli, is hair-raisingly exciting. Pederzini's coloratura in Rossini may not be quite as free as Supervia's or Horne's, but it is more than adequate to the task, and she brings her own strong persona to Isabella's two arias from L'ITALIANA IN ALGERI.

In fact it is this strong persona that is the most distinguishing characteristic of Pederzini's art. Allied to it musically is how well she has thought out details of phrasing, articulation, inflection, and shading, and yet what comes across sounds as if it is being created on the spot. There is not one track on the two discs that does not evidence a strong personality, a highly developed musical intelligence, and a sense of passion for the act of singing.

The operatic numbers are all accompanied by orchestra, the songs by piano. All of the accompaniments are at least adequate, and many are more than that. As is usual with St. Laurent Studio, there are no program notes or texts. However, the painstaking care with which the transfers have been done is reward enough for lovers of great singing."

- Henry Fogel, FANFARE