

# Mastering Equipment Used In Our Recordings

Digital: Weiss ADC2 Analog to Digital Converter

Mytek ADC192 Modified by Steve Nugent  
of Empirical Audio

Lynx AES16 used for digital I/O

Antelope Audio Isochrone OCX Master Clock

Weiss Saracon Sample Rate Conversion Software

Weiss POW-r Dithering Software

Analog: Studer 810 Reel to Reel with  
JRF Magnetics Custom Z Heads & Siltech wiring

Aria tape head pre-amp by ATR Services

Manley Tube Tape Pre-amps Modified by  
Fred Volz of Emotive Audio

Cables: Purist Audio Design, Pure Note, Siltech

Power Cords: Purist Audio Design,  
Essential Sound Products

Vibration Control: Symposium Acoustics Rollerblocks,  
Ultra platforms, Svelte shelves

Sonic Studio CD.1 Professional CD Burner using  
Mitsui Gold Archival CD's

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## Facts about this Recording

Recorded by Decca

November 12-14, 1958 at La Maison de la Chimie, Paris

Produced by Ray Minshull • Engineer Kenneth Wilkinson



PARIS CONSERVATORIE ORCHESTRA  
PETER MAAG CONDUCTING

# ROSSINI OVERTURES

WILLIAM TELL  
LA CENERENTOLA  
SEMIRAMIDE  
LA GAZZA LADRA



Gioachino Rossini was the most popular and prolific operatic composer of his day. He was adored all over Italy and eventually across Europe as he moved to Vienna and Paris. He became such a center of the operatic world that composers like Cimarosa and Paisiello were nearly forgotten and contemporaries like Bellini and Donizetti were simply overshadowed. And then, at the age of 37, Rossini simply stopped writing. It was not until he was much older that Rossini picked up the pen again, to write mostly short pieces, never again composing in the operatic form that had won him so much fame. Gioachino Rossini's remarkable existence began on a fairly remarkable day - February 29, 1792 - in Pesaro, Italy. From the outset, Rossini had little chance of not making a successful career in music. His father, Giuseppe Rossini, was an accomplished horn player and his mother, Anna Guidarini, was a locally famous operatic singer. Not surprisingly then, young Gioachino learned the horn from his father and singing from his mother (and a local canon, whose vast collection of scores had some influence on the boy's musical taste).

Rossini must have been incredibly gifted as a singer because at 14 he was invited to join the same music academy of which his father was a member. (Or maybe it was nepotism - who knows?) Rossini soon studied counterpoint and composition and also pursued further voice and instrument study. Except for Mozart, Rossini reportedly didn't generally care for the "serious music" he was forced to study, but there's no doubt he benefited from the exposure; his achievements in harmony, part-writing and orchestration would not have been so great had he limited himself to the music which prevailed in Italian theaters of the day. Rossini didn't write much as a student. Some say he composed numerous arias for insertion into operas around Bologna, but no proof exists. His first definitive commission for an opera was in 1807 for a libretto entitled *Demetrio e Polibio*. Unfamiliar with the plot, Rossini proceeded anyway, one piece at a time, until the entire score was finished. For Rossini, opera was easy. Rossini received numerous commissions from a theater in Venice (some successful, some not) and requests from other theaters followed rapidly. Rossini wrote in opera buffa or comic opera style (i.e. *The Barber of Seville*) and opera seria (i.e. *Demetrio e Polibio* and *Tancredi*) and... everywhere in between. Because of the lack of copyright law in Italy at the time, Rossini's earnings were limited to performances in which he participated. Forced to support both himself and, increasingly, his parents, Rossini delved into one opera after another. He traveled and wrote constantly, often spending less than a month on each work. But it wasn't just his need for cash that spurred Rossini on. The only thing more seemingly endless than Rossini's knack for writing operas was the Italian public's desire for new works. So Rossini wrote and wrote - *An Italian in Algiers*, *The Turk in Italy*, *Cinderella*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *William Tell* - one opera followed another. In 1822, Rossini married soprano Isabella Colbran. That same year the couple traveled to Vienna where Rossini composed for a theater owned by a friend. After a brief return to Italy and a few more operas, the couple set out for Paris and England. Rossini held a couple of posts in Paris, first as director of the Italian Theater there and then as a composer for the Paris Opera. After six years in Paris, Rossini simply stopped writing opera. His last was *William Tell*. He was 37. There doesn't seem to be one clear reason why Rossini stopped composing. Certainly, the number of operas he composed annually had decreased with each passing year. Also, by now, Rossini had found financial security. Finally, Rossini is ill, apparently from a venereal disease (though there is evidence that some of Rossini's ills were purely psychosomatic). All told, he had simply run out of energy. Despite numerous requests and even begging at times, Rossini would write no more operas. Rossini returned to Bologna in 1837, but not to happier times. In fact, Rossini was miserable there. His marriage to Isabella was troubled from the start and, around 1830, Rossini took a mistress named Olympe Pélissier.

A year after Isabella's death in 1845, Rossini married Olympe. But Rossini's poor health continued. He wrote very little save his *Stabat Mater*, which was received very well and may be one of the few highpoints of this chapter in Rossini's life. By 1855 Rossini had had enough of Italy (and his Italian doctors) and decided to move back to Paris. The idea was a good one. Rossini was renewed in Paris. His health improved and his sense of humor returned. Testaments to the new and improved Rossini are his 150 or so piano pieces he titled "Sins of Old Age." This collection of "wit and parody" was a welcome return to the buffo style for which Rossini had become famous. They were a tremendous hit in Paris. Rossini lived out the rest of his life in his villa in Paris with Olympe where he enjoyed celebrity status. When he died (presumably of cancer) in 1868, thousands attended his funeral and memorial services were held throughout France and Italy. He was 76.

## Peter Maag (1919 - 2001)

Peter Maag was born into a musical family: his mother, a violinist, had played with the Capet Quartet, and his father was both a musician and a distinguished theologian. He studied literature, philosophy and theology at the universities of Geneva, Zürich and Basle, as well as music with the conductor Franz von Hösslin, between 1942 and 1946. His first appointment (1943) was as a répétiteur and chorusmaster at the civic theatre at Biel-Solothurn in Switzerland where he quickly progressed to the post of first conductor. Having left Biel-Solothurn in 1946, Maag spent the following years studying opera in Paris and Rome, assisting Ansermet and Furtwängler, and conducting concerts with various orchestras including the Suisse Romande Orchestra. He continued to work with Ansermet following his appointment in 1952 as first conductor at Düsseldorf, where he stayed for three years before moving on to the position of chief conductor at Bonn. Here he extended the repertoire by introducing unfamiliar operas such as Cavalieri's *La rappresentazione di Anima, e di Corpo*, Dvořák's *Rusalka*, and Schumann's *Genoveva*, as well as works by Hindemith, Martin, Martinů, and Toch. In 1959, the year in which he left Bonn, Maag made his debuts at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden with *Die Zauberflöte* and at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera with *Le nozze di Figaro*: he then withdrew from performance, entering a Buddhist monastery in Hong Kong in order to reassess his life and musical career. Returning to conducting in 1961, Maag led *Così fan tutte* at the Chicago Lyric Opera, and became active as a guest conductor throughout Europe, North and South America and Japan. Between 1964 and 1968 he served as chief conductor at the Volksoper in Vienna, followed by short appointments at the Teatro Regio in Parma during 1972 (the year in which he made his Metropolitan Opera debut with *Don Giovanni*), and at the Teatro Regio in Turin during 1974. He was especially popular in Italy, where he taught at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena from 1968 onwards and conducted frequently at La Scala, Milan. He was awarded the Toscanini Medal (Parma) in 1969, the Verdi Medal in 1973, and the Toscanini Presentation Baton in 1975. Maag was a frequent conductor of the various Italian radio orchestras, and was also active in Spain where he conducted the Spanish National Orchestra; he was chief conductor of the Berne Symphony Orchestra between 1984 and 1991, and of the Orchestra of Padua and the Veneto from 1983 until his death, recording extensively for the Arts Music label with the latter ensemble.

Maag's international reputation was founded initially on his interpretation of Mozart, to whose music he brought a combination of drive and elegance which was highly refreshing: his early recordings, for Decca, fully reflect these twin characteristics. He went on to make several early stereophonic recordings for Decca of music by Mendelssohn and Mozart with the London Symphony Orchestra which were very highly praised, and which have continued to hold an admired place in the catalogue. During the 1960s he recorded further music by Mozart as well as the complete symphonies of Schubert for the Vox label. After several assignments with the Deutsche Grammophon, Supraphon and Westminster labels, during the 1970s he made two significant opera recordings which were released on the Decca label: Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, and Paer's *Leonora*. Several live opera performances from this period have also been released which attest to Maag's vitality in the theatre. His discography with the Orchestra of Padua and the Veneto, created during the 1990s, was large, and included all the Beethoven and Mendelssohn symphonies, as well as the major symphonies of Mozart. Maag was a conductor of considerable musical taste whose career, particularly towards the end of his life, may have reflected his personal priorities rather than his full potential.



# Rossini Overtures

Peter Maag Conducting The  
Paris Conservatorie Orchestra

- 1) Semiramide Overture 12:22
- 2) La Gazza Ladra Overture 9:33
- 3) William Tell Overture 12:26
- 4) La Cenerentola Overture 7:53

Transferred from a London 4-Track Tape

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Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks.

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