

OPERA NEWS

PUBLISHED BY
THE METROPOLITAN
OPERA GUILD

Contents



FEATURES

20 Modern & Present

Soprano **MARINA REBEKA** has founded a recording label, Prima Classic.

By A. J. Goldmann

Photographed by Tatyana Vlasova

28 The Maestro

CHRISTIAN THIELEMANN is a contemporary conductor of the old school.

By David J. Baker

32 Progress Report

Will the classical-music **RECORDING INDUSTRY** continue to evolve?

By Fred Cohn

Illustration by Ben Kirchner

COVER

Photographed in Riga
by Tatyana Vlasova

STAR SOPRANO
MARINA REBEKA
HAS HER OWN
RECORD LABEL.

BY A. J. GOLDMANN

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY TATYANA VLASOVA

Marina Rebeka,
soprano and
recording label
exec

MODERN &
PRESENT

A FEW YEARS AGO, Latvian soprano Marina Rebeka had an inspiration. "I thought, 'Why don't we use the tools that pop music has to make opera sound modern, beautiful and really present?'" she says. It didn't hurt that her romantic partner (now husband), Edgardo Vertanessian, was a sound engineer with decades of recording experience in both pop and classical.

Together, they founded Prima Classic, a small independent record label, in 2018. To date, it has released more than forty albums, including four solo recordings for the soprano, starting with *Spirito* (2018), which features Rebeka in arias by Bellini, Donizetti and Spontini. Her most recent album on the label is *Voyage* (2022). Pianist Mathieu Pordey delicately paces her in an eclectic assortment of polyglot songs by nineteenth-century French composers. The disc brings Saint-Saëns, Fauré and Gounod together with their lesser-known female contemporaries Marie Jaëll and Pauline Viardot.

Also in Prima's catalogue are full studio recordings of *La Traviata* (2019) and *Il Pirata* (2020), both featuring Rebeka heading starry casts. The soprano's recent turn to record producing is a daring and unexpected chapter in the career of an artist who has become a fixture at the world's leading opera houses.

I've caught Rebeka onstage in Europe at regular intervals over the past fifteen years; every encounter with her has shown her to be a shrewd and distinctive singer who makes every role, and every performance, count. I first heard her at the Komische Oper Berlin in 2008, in *Teseo*, one of Rebeka's rare Baroque out-

**“EVERYBODY HAS CALLAS IN HIS EARS.
BUT THAT DOESN’T MEAN
THAT YOU HAVE TO SING IT LIKE CALLAS SANG IT.”**

