



Included here are concert arias, operatic arias, arias to be inserted into other composers' operas, alternate arias (the best known, 'Al desio di chi t'adora,' to be sung by Susanna in the last act of *Marriage of Figaro* in place of 'De vieni' — sung by Cecilia Bartoli in several of her 1998 Met performances), and the usually omitted Zerlina-Leporello duet from *Don Giovanni*. The 13 selections were tailored to the special vocal and dramatic qualities of Catarina Cavalieri (Mozart's first Constanze), Nancy Storage (the first Susanna), Adriana Ferrararese del Bene (the first Fiordiligi), Luisa Laschi Mombelli (the first Countess Almaviva), and Louise Villeneuve (the first Dorabella). All the basic emotions of opera seria, opera buffa, and *singspiel* are represented; and the excellent performances, informative notes, and texts and translations contribute to an entertaining foray into musicology.

This practice of creating arias and duets for particular singers could sometimes become very complicated in the classical and romantic eras. The last selection on this program is a scena with a recitative by Mozart for an aria by Cimarosa — both to be inserted into a third composer's opera: *La Quakera Spiritosa* by Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi.

Ms. Michaels, Associate Professor of Opera Theater and Studio Voice at the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music in Appleton, Wisconsin, has specialized in music of the baroque and classical eras. There is nothing the least bit academic about her work on this record. She is equally at home in the serious and comic selections and never indulges in vocal or interpretive overkill. She handles the virtuoso areas as if they are pieces of cake and is also able to sing more reflective, lyrical moments in an appealingly simple manner. The voice is at

best a beautiful lyric soprano. And her diction is excellent. An English-language aria by Stephen Storage (Nancy's brother), composed for insertion into a British production of Paisiello's *Re Teodoro in Venezia*, is a welcome contrast to the mushy diction typical of many American sopranos singing in their native tongue.

Further pleasure in listening to this comes from the sensitive, alert conducting of Mr. Alltop, the evocative fortepiano in Mozart's 'Non temer, amato bene,' and the humorous work in two tracks by bass-baritone Peter Van De Graaff. *Divas of Mozart's Day* is based on a concept by musicologist Dorothea Link, Assistant Professor of Music History at the University of Georgia. I'd like to think she and Ms. Michaels are busy planning future volumes.

— Mark

