

atypical of the nineteenth century. That these works were ultimately recorded on separate tracks, however, offers the potential to listen to them in random order at pleasure, instead of being confined to the sole modality of listening to them sequentially in their entirety.

Earlier recordings of Clara Schumann's music have predominantly been in conjunction with works by other composers, in the same way that her music would occasionally have been performed during her lifetime. The CDs reviewed here are but two of a quickly growing collection that, alongside scholarship, reflects this burgeoning interest in, and joint effort at, championing her life and works. Beyond commemorating the bicentenary of her birth, these CDs offer the opportunity for one to become acquainted with Clara Schumann's compositional oeuvre by keeping a focus solely on her voice as a composer. What we have here is an elevation of Clara Schumann's status as composer that is commensurate with the status already accorded to many of her contemporaries with whom she worked and knew intimately. With the passage of time, she has come to be known not only as a remarkable virtuoso, woman, and wife, but now, too, as Clara Schumann the composer.

Cheryl Tan  
Cornell University  
[cwt48@cornell.edu](mailto:cwt48@cornell.edu)

doi: 10.1017/S1479409822000234

First published online 4 July 2022

#### A Tribute to Pauline Viardot

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Marina Viotti, *mezzo-soprano*  
Les Talens Lyriques  
Christophe Rousset, *conductor*  
Aparté AP290, 2022  
(1 CD: 78 minutes). €19.00

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Commemorating the two-hundredth anniversary of her birth in 1821, 'A Tribute to Pauline Viardot' is a lovingly produced collaboration by mezzo-soprano Marina Viotti, conductor Christophe Rousset, and the period instrument group Les Talens Lyriques, with liner notes by Patrick Barbier.<sup>1</sup> The CD highlights operatic arias with which Viardot was closely associated, both on stage and in her less visible but equally important role as friend and promoter of young composers such as Gounod, Saint-Saëns, and Massenet.

Born into a family that produced two of the most renowned singers of the nineteenth century – her father, tenor Manuel Garcia, and sister, mezzo Maria Malibran – Viardot has recently garnered well-deserved attention from scholars

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the singer, see Patrick Barbier, *Pauline Viardot* (Paris: Grasset, 2009).

and performers alike. Her artistic circle reads like a Who's Who, from the nine composers represented on Viotti's CD, discussed below, to Chopin, George Sand, Liszt, Meyerbeer, Clara Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Charles Dickens, and Ivan Turgenev. Sand summarized Viardot's breadth as 'a divine singer and unrivaled woman with as many ideas as Rossini and as much knowledge as Meyerbeer'.<sup>2</sup> Adolphe Adam described her as one who, 'sings in, and speaks five languages, who plays the piano like an angel, is as good a harmonist as anyone, who sings like her sister and who composes things that we would have been proud to have written', while Liszt found that her compositions displayed 'much skill in harmonic subtleties (which would be envied by many famous composers)'.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it is disappointing that this tribute CD does not include any of Viardot's work as composer. The 18 minutes spent on two overtures may have been better devoted to a few of Viardot's more than 100 songs – perhaps her well-known settings of Chopin's mazurkas, or an original one with a connection to a composer represented on the CD, such as *En Mer* (1850) dedicated to Berlioz.<sup>4</sup> This omission lends surely unintended support to the notion that women are still more acceptable as performers than as composers.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, the liner notes describe Viardot as Turgenev's 'muse, his inspiration, his ideal woman', but they do not mention his respect for her compositions. As Lubov Keefer reported, 'Turgenev informed his translator Friedrich Bodenstedt that his "close friend" Pauline Viardot had marvelously set to music lines of Pushkin and Fet, expressing his confidence that this lover of Slavic poetry would do them justice'.<sup>6</sup>

There is plenty to admire in Viardot's work as performer. Setting a high bar for singers, she was renowned for her three-octave range with a timbre that spanned soprano, mezzo, and alto. Her technique and interpretation were impeccable. As described by Musset, 'She abandons herself to inspiration with an easy simplicity which lends everything an air of grandeur ... She possesses that great secret of artists: before she sings anything, she feels it. She does not listen to her voice, but to her heart'.<sup>7</sup>

The selections on the disc are well chosen in relation to Viardot's career, beginning with the role arguably most identified with the singer – Berlioz's 1859

<sup>2</sup> Lubov Keefer, 'The Opera Librettos of Ivan Turgenev', *The Slavic and East European Journal* 10/2 (1966): 138. Sand dedicated her novel, *Consuelo*, to Viardot.

<sup>3</sup> Amy Damron Kyle, 'Un-Gendering Genius: Re-writing How we Perceive Musical Genius through the Life of Pauline Viardot-García', in *Musicology and Its Future in Times of Crises* (Zagreb: University of Zagreb, 2022): 118.

<sup>4</sup> On the connection to Chopin, see Francois Berger, 'Histoire d'une amitié: Frederic Chopin et Pauline Viardot', in *Chopin and His Work in the Context of Culture*, ed. Irena Poniatowska (Kraków: Polish Chopin Academy, 2003): 130–50; and Maria Anna Harley, 'Chopin and Women Composers: Collaborations, Imitations, Inspirations', *The Polish Review* 45/1 (2000): 29–50.

<sup>5</sup> Further on the disconnect between gender and genius, see Kyle, 'Un-Gendering Genius': 'Exceptional women were perceived as such an anomaly that to accommodate the fact, writers like Diderot referred to great female figures like Sophie Volland as a "man", and Jules and Edmond de Goncourt surmised that George Sand, Germaine de Staël and Pauline Viardot were hermaphrodites.' 122.

<sup>6</sup> Keefer, 'The Operetta Librettos of Ivan Turgenev', 151n31. Of her compositions, 'Turgenev was especially fond of Pauline's *La Chapelle, L'Ombre et le jour*, and *Adieu aux beaux jours* (in *Album de Mme Viardot Garcia* [Paris 1843]). Keefer also tells us that, in a letter to Viardot of 19 June 1865, Turgenev offered 'a novel in exchange for a sonata'.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Kendall-Davies, *The Life and Work of Pauline Viardot*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2013): 1:60.

arrangement of Gluck's *Orphée*, which was created with her in mind. According to Hilary Poriss, 'Viardot's performance aided not only in canonizing Gluck's work but also in canonizing her own achievements as one of the nineteenth century's most important performers'.<sup>8</sup> It was staged at the Théâtre-Lyrique for five consecutive years, and Viardot performed the title role in most of its 138 performances. She chose it for her farewell performance there in 1863, and late in life articulated its special connection as the only role during which she never felt extraneous thoughts enter her mind during performance.<sup>9</sup> Viotti's recording of the recitative, 'Qu'entends-je', could have benefited from greater timbral variety (one of Viardot's hallmarks) in response to the emotional extremes of the title character. Coming into her own in the aria, 'Amour, viens rendre à mon âme', Viotti's coloratura captures the ease and agility of bel canto singing at its best, another Viardot hallmark. With its chromatic ascending and descending scales, the famously virtuosic cadenza is superbly executed here, though the tempo is on the slower side.

Romeo in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* is another trouser role of which Viardot was especially proud. Writing to Count Vielhorsky about her performances in 1848, Viardot suggests that even where critical reception of the opera might fall short, her standout performance as Romeo was recognized: 'do you know that I Capuleti has been played, that the music has not been a great success, but that Romeo has been a real triumph?'<sup>10</sup> Bellini actually wrote the part for Giuditta Grisi, sister of Giulia Grisi, a rival of Viardot. That rivalry has been given nuance by Poriss, who quotes Viardot on Grisi having taught her 'certain ornaments and cadenzas'.<sup>11</sup> In Viotti's rendition of 'Se Romeo t'uccise un figlio', one misses variety of tone, as in the repeated phrases at the end of the recitative. On the topic of nuanced repetition, Viardot herself was very clear. For example, in her edition of 'J'ai perdu' from *Orphée*, she specifies that although the three repetitions of the refrain are all sung mezzo forte, on the second time it 'must be said with a very low, broken voice with continual sobs' to 'express the despondency of the pain'; while the third time should be 'more animated with movement, stronger voice, more energy in expression, it is nothing but a long cry of despair'.<sup>12</sup> In the aria, 'La tremenda ultrice spada', Viotti's performance is stylistically very appealing, with wonderful lightness of fioritura. The cabaletta is not repeated, a missed opportunity especially since we do have access to Rossini's own ornamentation for it.<sup>13</sup> While a small chorus would be needed in order to make the connection to the return, it seems worth the effort.

Viotti shines in French repertoire. In Massenet's *Marie-Magdeleine*, she creates a beautiful line that is very responsive to text, as in the subtle contrast between the first 'la douceur' and the special tone at *piu dolce* for 'la douceur infinie' to evoke

<sup>8</sup> Hilary Poriss, 'Redefining the Standard: Pauline Viardot and Gluck's Orphee', *The Oxford Handbook of the Operatic Canon*, ed. Cormac Newark and William Weber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 363.

<sup>9</sup> Poriss, 'Redefining the Standard', 375.

<sup>10</sup> Kendall-Davies, *The Life and Work of Pauline Viardot*, 1:331.

<sup>11</sup> Poriss, 'Pauline Viardot, On Rivalry', in *Tracing Operatic Performances in the Long Nineteenth Century: Practices, Performers, Peripheries*, ed. Anne Kaupalla, Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen and Jens Hesselager (Helsinki: University of the Arts Helsinki, 2017): 36.

<sup>12</sup> Poriss, 'Redefining the Standard', 368–9.

<sup>13</sup> Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars: Performing Italian Opera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 321–2.

the two types of sweetness. Tonal subtlety is also lovely at 'quel espoir nouveau, quel espoir me soutien', though it would have been more helpful if the booklet provided a literal rather than a rhyming translation, as the reader will miss that subtlety when reading, 'how I hope, though we're apart' instead of 'what new hope, what hope sustains me'. (Translation is an unfortunate issue throughout.) This selection is a good choice to showcase Viardot's importance to young composers: Massenet noted receiving praise 'from his mentor, Ambroise Thomas, from Georges Bizet, and from Pauline Viardot, who encouraged its performance and also sang the title role at the oratorio's première in 1873'.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Halévy greatly admired Viardot's performance in his *La Juive*, and Viotti's rendition of 'Il va venir' from that work lives up to her predecessor's reputation for inhabiting a role, as she conveys the fear and urgency of Rachel's words.

A family friend, Rossini occupied a crucial place for Viardot, whose first five operatic appearances from the time of her London debut in 1839 were all by the composer. Porris describes Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* as not only one of the roles with the greatest success for the singer but also one of her favourites throughout her career, congenial to her vocal and acting abilities. As late as 1857, Viardot was clearly aware of how special this role was: 'You know, it still takes me two or three evenings to grab my audience, except when I begin with my dear *Barbiere*'. Her report on her performances in Poland that year says it all:

8 call backs, 6 of which were at the end. Everything that I sang was literally covered with applause. Cavatina, Duet, every phrase. In the lesson scene ... I sang the Mazurkas, and then to *assassinate* them, I threw Chopin's *Hulanka* at their faces. That sealed it. Encoored, my knees are shaking from bowing so much. Certainly it must have lasted 10 minutes – men, women, everyone applauded, everyone shouted.<sup>15</sup>

In Rosina's 'Una voce poco fa', Viotti makes judicious choices of ornamentation, and she achieves lightness and ease, with nice comic play. The orchestral woodwinds are exceptional here as well.

The CD offers balance with a serious Rossini role in *Semiramide*, but the full 12-minute overture occupies a lot of time on a disc dedicated to a singer, time that may have been better spent on original Viardot songs. The ensemble shines here, with its crisp period brass, contrast of mood in lyrical and rhythmic winds, and of course the trademark Rossini crescendos, which come off as intended, capturing the exciting accumulation of elements rather than a simple dynamic increase. The queen's Cavatina, 'Bel raggio lusinghier', seems an odd choice since Viardot was associated with the trouser role of Arsace. However, this cavatina is clearly in Viotti's wheelhouse, and she channels the essence of Viardot with nuanced shades of contrasting emotions and effortlessly spectacular coloratura singing.

Donizetti was director of Vienna's Kärnthnerthor Theatre, where he engaged Viardot to sing Rosina in *Barbiere*. A staunch advocate, he encouraged Leon Pillét, director of the Paris Opera, to do the same.<sup>16</sup> The seven roles that Viardot

<sup>14</sup> Esti Sheinberg, "'The Infinite Grace of Jesus": Massenet's Marie-Magdeleine and Tchaikovsky', *Music and Letters* 91/2 (2010): 146–7.

<sup>15</sup> Hilary Poriss, 'Pauline Viardot, Travelling Virtuosa', *Music and Letters* 96/2 (2015): 195.

<sup>16</sup> Kendall-Davies, *The Life and Work of Pauline Viardot*, 1:213.

created in Donizetti's operas represent her greatest number by a single composer: Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*; the title roles in *Alina*, *Lucia*, and *Maria di Rohan*, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Orsini in *Lucrezia Borgia*, and, as on this recording, Leonora in *La favorite*. This last is a wonderful choice, as listeners might be somewhat familiar with the rarely performed Italian version but are likely unaware of the original French one. In this scene, described by William Ashbrook as one of the great monologues of French opera, Leonore struggles with how to reveal to Fernand that she is the mistress of the King, and at what cost to them. Viotti ably showcases the range in which Viardot excelled, as in the descent of a twelfth to below the staff in one diminished arpeggio on 'Oh! ce serait infâme!' After capturing the contrasts in the recitative from fierce shame to soft contemplation, she sings the cantabile with beautiful sensitivity and line – especially notable out of the first section fermata and into 'Si ta justice' without a breath. In the recitative interruption, Viotti nails the stark emotional change, and she creates a towering build in the dramatic cabaletta.

Of all the selections, *Les Troyens* has the most complicated relationship to Viardot, with whom Berlioz spent time in Baden-Baden where they were preoccupied with his health concerns. She sang excerpts in 1859, and she transcribed the full work for piano. When in 1863 the Théâtre-Lyrique finally put on an abbreviated version (the last three acts), Berlioz did not give her the role of Cassandra or Dido, bemoaning her failure to 'acknowledge the ravages of time' on her voice. It was actually Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein whose letters show evidence of editing the work and of keeping his spirits up, confirmed by Berlioz's reply articulating her 'vibrations in tune with the distant echo of *our* work'.<sup>17</sup> Viotti achieves nice contrast on the words 'if there is anything human left in his soul' and 'the futile prayer' in the recitative, 'Ah, Je vais mourir'; and beautifully long lines in the aria, 'Adieu fière cité'.

The relationship between work and singer is again clear in Gounod's *Sapho*. For Melina Esse, 'It is no exaggeration to say that Pauline Viardot's role in the composition of Charles Gounod's *Sapho* was fundamental to the work's very existence'.<sup>18</sup> Viardot introduced the neophyte opera composer to librettist Emile Augier and helped secure the Opéra première via her promise to perform the title role. The selection on the CD was crucial to the opera and to what Gounod saw as their collaboration on it, as he reported after she sang it for his family: 'Huuuuuge success. They found the last number grippingly dramatic and were greatly moved by it. As was I. I can hardly wait to *give* you all of this: *you for whom* and a bit *by whom* I have made it'.<sup>19</sup> Esse finds it plausible, as others have suggested, that Viardot was instrumental in the decision to replace the original closing number with the composer's pre-existing *La chanson du pêcheur*. In a letter to Turgenev, Viardot clarifies her identification with this version: 'the *Lamento* will be inserted – this has been decided – but only as a purely lyrical number: as the last song of Sapho. Her lyre in her hand, she will bid farewell to Phaon, to the sun, to her lyre, and finally to her life, and she will dive headfirst and drown herself in the tears that she has

<sup>17</sup> Beth Hart, 'The Loves of Hector Berlioz, in His Life and in *Les Troyens*', *The Opera Quarterly* 19/3 (2003): 338.

<sup>18</sup> Melina Esse, 'The Sexual Politics of Operatic Collaboration: Gounod, "Ô ma lyre immortelle" (*Sapho*, *Sapho*, Act III', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 28/2 (2016): 173.

<sup>19</sup> Melanie Von Goldbeck, ed., *Lettres de Charles Gounod à Pauline Viardot* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2015): 161; cited in Esse, 'The Sexual Politics', 171.

made the spectators shed'.<sup>20</sup> Viotti does not quite capture that emotionally charged character in the recitative and aria, 'Où suis-je? Ô ma lyre immortelle'. This is a missed opportunity, as Gounod leaves the voice unencumbered by orchestra in the recitative. With no melisma writing, the aria should highlight expressive simplicity, but it, too, sounds monochromatic and with an undirected line, possibly hampered by a slow tempo for the marked *Andante*.

Viardot attempted to do for Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* what she did for Gounod's *Sapho*, namely, use her influence to gain a première at the Paris Opera. But even her private performance with the composer at the piano did not make that happen. With Liszt's support it was finally premiered in Weimar in 1877, by which time it was too late for Viardot to play the role. Here Viotti does great justice to the recitative and aria, 'Samson recherchant ma présence ... Amour, viens aider ma faiblesse', creating a lovely sense of line with nuanced sensitivity to the gamut of emotions that Dalila feels as she seeks the strength to carry out her plan. And the selection makes a strong and fitting conclusion to the CD, conveying the qualities that Viotti at her best shares with Viardot: long beautiful lines, superb execution as in the quick descending scale from G above the staff to B-flat below, and a pure sound on the final low A-flat.

Overall, there is much to be praised on this recording, which makes a valuable contribution to broadening awareness of Viardot's significance for nineteenth-century music. In so doing, Viotti has continued on a path forged early by Marilyn Horne, whose 'Souvenir of a Golden Era: The Sisters Garcia' of 1966 was re-released by Decca in 2008 (Decca 475 8493; disc one is dedicated to Maria, and two to Pauline).<sup>21</sup> And more recently, Cecilia Bartoli planned the 2020 Salzburg Whitsun Festival as an exploration of the life and work of Viardot, including some of her own compositions.<sup>22</sup> There are wonderful recordings of Viardot's songs for voice and piano,<sup>23</sup> but of course the operatic repertoire requires orchestral accompaniment, and here Viotti's choice of Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques is most felicitous. This is especially true in the selection from *Les Troyens*, where Rousset brings out the Weber-influenced contrasts and colours in the opening of the recitative, 'ah, je vais mourir', with its agitated, fortissimo introduction and sudden drop to pianissimo string tremolos that alternate with darkly expressive bass clarinet solos, giving way to the clarity of the well-blended wind choir. The aria, 'Adieu fière cité', enters in delicate dialogue with

<sup>20</sup> Michèle Friang, *Pauline Viardot au miroir de sa correspondance* (Paris: Hermann, 2008), 108; cited in Esse, *The Sexual Politics*, 172.

<sup>21</sup> Horne was closely identified with the Viardot tradition: 'One of the most wonderful things ever given me was a beautiful portrait Viardot drew of herself. Her granddaughter, who died only last year, sent it to me when I made my debut at the Paris Opéra five years ago. She wrote me that she felt I was the only singer today who was carrying on the vocal traditions of the Garcia family. For that reason alone, I feel an extra sense of responsibility singing this role [Fidès in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*] that was so carefully tailored for Pauline Viardot'; Peter G. Davis, 'Marilyn Horne Puts Prophecy to the Test', *New York Times* (11 January 1977).

<sup>22</sup> Bartoli has run the Festival since 2012, with an emphasis on female figures; the 2020 iteration focusing on Viardot was cancelled due to Covid-19.

<sup>23</sup> See especially Isabel Bayrakdarian's 2004 Analekta recording (AN 2 9903) of Viardot's French, German, and Italian songs; and Ina Kancheva's 2016 Toccata Classics disc (TOCC0303) with Viardot's Mazurkas and 15 of her many Russian songs on texts of Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Fet, Koltsov, and Tutchev.

the clarinets, and the strings lend subtle responsiveness to the shifting harmonies of the closing section. Throughout the disc, her collaborators lend crucial support to Viotti's committed interpretation.

Catherine Coppola  
Hunter College of CUNY  
[ccoppola@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:ccoppola@hunter.cuny.edu)

doi: 10.1017/S1479409823000319

First published online 15 September 2023

*Schubert: Schwanengesang*

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Ian Bostridge, *ten*, Lars Vogt, *piano*  
Pentatone 5186786, 2022 (1 CD: 69 minutes) €18

*Schubert: Winterreise*

Ian Bostridge, *ten*, Thomas Adès, *piano*  
Pentatone 5186764, 2019 (1 CD: 57 minutes) €18

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The release of Ian Bostridge's and Lars Vogt's CD of Franz Schubert's *Schwanengesang* and 'Einsamkeit', D. 620, on 25 September 2022, was tinged by a sense of untimeliness, for Vogt had passed away earlier that month, just shy of 52. The occasion of Vogt's passing and the repertoire recorded bring to mind not only Schubert's death at the tender age of 31, but also those of his poets: Wilhelm Müller, who penned *Winterreise*, died in 1827, the year before Schubert, and Johann Mayrhofer, the author of 'Einsamkeit', died by suicide barely a decade later at age 48. Pondering the issue of timeliness, the literary critic Edward Said observed that if death is expected to follow old age, that is, 'the last or late period of life', then the untimeliness of 'the onset of ill health or other factors ... in a younger person' remind us of the connection between timeliness and lateness, both of which have saturated some of the most recent Schubert scholarship.<sup>1</sup> With these themes of timeliness and lateness in mind, listeners might be inclined to retrospectively hear this recording of Schubert's 'swan songs' as a musical valediction by Vogt. On the other hand, for Bostridge, who has made a career out of performing Schubert Lieder, it would be premature to say that his singing has developed into its own 'late style', but this CD demonstrates that his interpretation has, of course, changed over the span of over 30 years. So, too, does Bostridge offer another rich

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006): 6. For scholarship exploring the issue of lateness in Schubert's music, see Lorraine Byrne Bodley and Julian Horton, eds., *Rethinking Schubert* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), as well as their co-edited volume, *Schubert's Late Music: History, Theory, Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).