

Fabulous Falstaff:  
on stage in Vivaldi's  
masterpiece at Teatro  
alla Scala, 2015



Verdi and librettist Arrigo Boito, he encompasses and evokes every possible form of feeling: love, hatred, dreams, illusions, the reality of life, loneliness, old age, youth and so much more. To interpret Falstaff, it is not enough simply to sing it well; it is essential to be an actor. To be – not to act. And that is very different.

My debut as Falstaff was in 2006 in Pisa. So, when the call from Milan's Teatro alla Scala came in 2015, I trembled with such fear! But at the same time, I immediately accepted, aware that I had shaped the role over time – even though time, in study, is never enough. Yet it was wonderful!

The chemistry with my colleagues, the conductor and the extraordinary production by Robert Carsen – everything contributed to making that performance truly unforgettable. It is certainly one of the most important milestones of my career and also of my life, because in the audience, in tears, was my beloved mother.

#### CONCERT HELL

##### Bellini *Il pirata*

Nicola Alaimo et al, Orchestra e Coro del Teatro alla Scala/Riccardo Frizza Teatro alla Scala, Milan (2018)  
As for a hellish memory from my career – it was also at Teatro alla Scala that this experience took place. A few years after my Falstaff debut there, in June of 2018 I performed the role of Ernesto in Bellini's *Il pirata*. It's of course an operatic masterpiece but, in my humble opinion, it's a masterpiece mainly for the soprano and tenor roles (Imogene and Gualtiero). I don't think

the baritone role – including the most famous aria 'Si, vincemmo, e il pregio io sento' – is the most exhilarating of parts to sing.

In any case, during this particular performance, I felt like I didn't have enough time to catch my breath during the evening, as I can in other roles, like Falstaff, for example. And perhaps I didn't prepare the role enough or my performance just didn't leave a strong enough impression on the public but at the curtain call, the audience let loose a wave of whistles and boos – which seemed to go on forever and seemed particularly intense from the gallery.

I know I'm not the only performer who has had such an experience, and it is all experience of course which obviously helped me grow as an artist, but when I had to return in the autumn of the same year in October for Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, I was absolutely terrified.

I was so scared, in fact, that I was at the point of cancelling, but it was thanks to my wife that the show went on, as they say. She said it to me straight: 'Look, *La Cenerentola* is your "thing". Dandini is a role you were born to sing. I think you were in fact born to sing Rossini, my dear, so don't worry and just go for it!'

And the rest is history – my performance as Dandini went very well and I managed to make peace with the La Scala audience.

*Opera Rara's Donizetti Songs, Volume 8, featuring Nicola Alaimo, is out on 5 June, and Alaimo will be performing with Carlo Rizzi at the Wigmore Hall on 16 June.*



Always curious: Stewart Copeland and Min Kwon

## MyHero



Pianist **Min Kwon** salutes the musical curiosity of **Stewart Copeland**, composer and former drummer of The Police

Having grown up in Korea and then being a piano nerd when I moved to the US, I had never heard of The Police! However, my younger sister, Yoon Kwon Costello, is a brilliant violinist who played in Stewart's Off The Score group, and I got to know him through that. Even then, I had no idea how much weight he carries as this cultural icon – people would whisper 'He's very famous!' to me – and the way he carries himself, you would have no idea. He's so humble.

What I admire about Stewart is that he has never sat on his laurels but is constantly developing and expanding as a musician. With him, the curiosity has never stopped – he just lives music. Nor is it just one type of music, and when you see the way he has evolved, it includes writing film music, opera, chamber music and so on. In fact, when I first went to his house, he was writing a percussion piece for the Juilliard School but also had on his shelves books about composers including Wagner, Ravel and Bartók and another about orchestration, so he was also studying and learning.

Eventually, I asked Stewart if he would contribute to my *America/Beautiful* project, in which I have asked many composers to write variations on 'America is Beautiful'. Impressively, he took the time to explore quite deeply the composers who were already involved and went through a lot of the pieces. And then, to my delight, he came back and said, 'Yes, I'd like to do it!' Min Kwon's five-disc, 76-piece *America/Beautiful* collection is released by the Delos label this month.