

# Elda Laro

PIANISTIN & DIRIGENTIN

One of the most versatile artists of her generation, Elda Laro's dream was always to one day express herself through the baton. As a conductor, pianist, chamber musician, harpsichordist and accompanist, the child prodigy from Scutari, Albania playing Beethoven's Piano Concerto no.1 at the age of only 11 with the National Orchestra went on to be selected as one of the most promising young Albanian musicians and was awarded an overseas scholarship allowing her to study with renowned pianist Remo Remoli at Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Turin, Italy. Elda is currently coach, pianist and staff conductor at the prestigious Deutsche Oper in Berlin and has performed with many of the world's greatest in classical music.

At the helm of the Orchestra of Teatro Massimo Bellini in Catania, she recently conducted Mozart's Coronation Mass and Beethoven's Piano Concerto no.2. In 2015 the National Opera in Tirana invited her to debut Vincenzo Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. After much success Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* directed from the harpsichord and a staged chorus / ballet performance choreographed by Yuri Vámos of Orff's *Carmina Burana* soon followed. During her years as Head of Music at the Münster Theatre and vocal coach at the university there, Elda was also chief conductor of the Münster Concert Choir performing regularly concerts and oratorio including an extensive tour of Italy with Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*.

She studied conducting with Rüdiger Bohn in Düsseldorf and masterclasses include Donato Renzetti, Roberto Rizzi Brignoli and Maurizio Arena. Elda's eclectic passion for learning including 10 years as a violinist, fluency of five languages; Italian, English, German, French and Albanian as well as an avid chamber musician gives her a solid base like many of history's greatest opera conductors.

Her piano studies have taken her from Paris, where in 1995-96 she was awarded a scholarship to study contemporary music with world renowned pianist Claude Helffer, to Salzburg, studying under Alfons Kontarsky. Elda's expertise of contemporary music was recently seen when she was chosen to prepare the world premiere of the opera *Wir aus Glas* by Yasutaki Inamori, a collaboration between the Deutsche Oper and the Biennale in Munich.

A much sought-after accompanist in song recitals, recent concert appearances include distinguished artists such as Ermonela Jaho, Saimir Pirgu, Dimitra Theodossiu with whom she appeared at London's Wigmore Hall (also on CD) and the late tenor Marcello Giordani at the Athletic Club in New York City. As a pianist, she had also collaborated with Mirella Freni, Carlo Bergonzi, Roberto Alagna, Renato Bruson, Fiorenza Cossotto and Edda Moser.

During the 2019/20 season Elda accompanied on tour, singer and world-leading cabaret star Ute Lemper at the Berlin Philharmonie, Hamburg's spectacular Elbphilharmonie, Alte Oper Frankfurt, the Tonhalle Düsseldorf and other major European venues under the direction of Antonello Manacorda.

Solo performances with leading conductors include Mstislav Rostropovich, Marc Soustrot, Konrad Junghänel, Bruno Campanella, Donato Renzetti, Marc Albrecht, Donald Runnicles. Major orchestras include the Orchestra of Teatro Regio in Turin, Parma's Orchestra Arturo Toscanini, Turin Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra Verdi Milan, I Pomeriggi Musicali Milan, Orchestra of Val d'Aosta and the RTSH Orchestra Tirana. Concert tours have taken her to Italy, Spain, UK, Austria, France, Japan, Malaysia and the United States.

As a recording artist, Elda Laro received critical acclaim for her Chandos CD of Bottesini chamber music awarded 5 stars by the Financial Times. Numerous awards include First Prize at the Concorso di Moncalieri in Turin (1991), Rassegna di Vittorio Veneto (1996) and Concorso di Grosseto (2000). In 2009 Elda was awarded the prestigious Premio Danzuso by the "Amici della Musica di Catania". Following her studies with the Accademia del Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Italy, Elda held positions at Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Teatro Regio in Turin, Tiroler Festspiele Erl, Arturo Toscanini Foundation in Parma and at the Ravenna Festival before joining Teatro Massimo Bellini in Catania for twelve years. Committed to sharing her expertise, Elda regularly gives masterclasses as a vocal coach. For the last 5 years she has taught in Portocomaro, Italy.

In 2021, Elda performed in Antwerp with Albanian soprano Ana Naqe and the contemporary dancer Nadine Baboy in two separate live streamed concerts featuring the music of Janaček and Korngold respectively. In June of that year, she returned to Opera Theatre of Tirana to conduct Donizetti's *Elisir d'Amore*, followed by a concert at the Festival "Mik" in Korça (Albania) with the Trio Deutsche Oper Berlin. A recital with star Albanian soprano Ermonela Jaho was held at the Palacio de Congresos in Palma de Mallorca in that September. The fruitful year was concluded with a masterclass on Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* at the Opera Theatre of Tirana also conducting the final performances.

The year 2022 saw an important collaboration with the composer Bernhard Gander, where Elda Laro conducted the world premiere of his "Lieder von Vertreibung und Nimmerwiederkehr" at the Munich Biennale, acclaimed by audience and press as an enormous success. This was a unique collaboration between the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Munich Biennale and the Ensemble Modern of Frankfurt. At the end of that year Elda returned to the Migjeni Theatre in Shkodër for the important New Year's concert, leading the TKOB Orchestra of Tirana.

With the same orchestra she opened the year 2023 conducting the operetta “Karnavalet” of Albanian composer Avni Mula. She then headed to the National Opera of Amsterdam to assist Enrique Mazzola in the production of Donizetti’s Maria Stuarda. There she conducted the stage rehearsals being particularly appreciated by soloists and chorus.

Elda Laro’s focus and range of interests doesn’t only apply to Opera, but to symphonic repertoire as well. In March of the same year she conducted a symphonic programme including Paganini’s first violin concerto with the Albanian violinist Laura Llozi and the youth orchestra OSFA.

Later in 2023 Elda Laro performed as a vocal coach and accompanist in several other occasions including the renowned MIK Festival organised by the Albanian soprano Inva Mula in Korçe. Mrs. Mula invited Elda to coach young talented singers at her international masterclass at the Steinway Hall of Dubai in November of the same year.

Other concerts as a pianist saw her perform in Berlin at the prestigious Konzerthaus in a recital with soprano Flaka Goranci (Oct. 2023), an acclaimed concert with soprano Carmen Giannattasio at the Teatro Regina Margherita in Caltanissetta – Italy (Nov. 2023) and a chamber music concert at the Teatro Filarmonico in Verona with the Quartetto Italiano and soprano Daniela Schillaci (Dec. 2023). Her inclination for chamber music sees Elda Laro as regular performing artist at the Deutsche Oper Berlin during the series “Advent Concerts” and in June 2024 with the Contrasts Trio by Béla Bartók at the Tischlerei Hall of the same theatre.

This year’s schedule is already full of events for Elda, starting in April conducting an important Gala concert in New York at the St. George Theatre in the frame of the Rame Lahaj International Opera Festival. Elda is also permanent guest as vocal coach, as member of the artistic team of the festival in Kosovo. Later in the same month she will perform the demanding Burlesque by Richard Strauss for piano and Orchestra as a soloist with the Neubrandenburg Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Daniel Klein.

Her activity as a conductor continues with an important debut in June at the Philharmonie Berlin (Kammermusiksaal) conducting the Konzertchor Münster with Chalres Gounod’s Cécilienmesse as part of the series of concerts “Choral Celebrations”. Later in August Elda Laro will conduct three performances of Strauss Elektra within the Dramatic Voices Program Berlin. In September she will be back in Tirana for another symphonic concert with the OSFA youth orchestra and in November in Pristina conducting the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra in a symphonic and vocal programme starring soprano Elbenita Kajtazi.

The interest of Elda Laro for Italian composer Vincenzo Bellini inspired her to organise a festival dedicated to the father of Belcanto in Berlin. The first edition will take place in December 2024 with other fellow singers and musicians at the Tischlerei Hall of the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

In the same hall she will conduct the whole production of Oscar Strauss Die lustigen Nibelungen in March 2025. Later in October she will lead the Tirana Opera Theatre Orchestra in a symphonic

concert within the “German October”, a series of cultural events curated by the German Embassy in Tirana. What looks to be a full and promising year sees Elda Laro assist Antonello Manacorda with Donizetti’s Maria Stuarda at the Salzburger Festspiele in June 2025.

As internationally acclaimed vocal coach and teacher, Elda Laro guests in various festivals and masterclasses in Italy, as at the Portacomaro Music Festival for young talented musicians and at the Ischia Masterclass for singers lead by American voice teacher Michael Paul.