

## artsclassical

# Maestro in the fast lane

**Hear Gianandrea Nosedà galvanise the LSO, writes**

**Richard Morrison**

**T**he London Symphony Orchestra once rejected Mahler as a conductor, chewed up the young Simon Rattle and gave Carlo Maria Giulini such a torrid time that the great Italian maestro never came back. This is an orchestra with a century-long history of petrifying conductors who petrify everyone else.

But it loves Gianandrea Nosedà, who is at the Barbican on Thursday with what will probably be a scorching account of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, along with a little light Wagner and Berg. And the lanky 46-year-old Milanese conductor loves the LSO back. "This is the most incredible band," he says. "Precision, commitment, total professionalism. And they don't waste time, as I don't. In Italy I am trying to introduce this British way of making music. It may take a little while."

Nosedà has been admired in Britain since his nine years in Manchester as principal conductor of the BBC Philharmonic. That was a partnership that went viral (as we now say) when Nosedà's live recordings of the Beethoven symphonies were made available free on the Radio 3 website — and downloaded 1.4 million times.

But the LSO's golden opinion of Nosedà dates from last October when Colin Davis had to pull out of conducting Britten's War Requiem in London and New York. Nosedà, who had never before conducted this complex 20th-century masterpiece, stepped in with superb results (as can be heard on the live recording).

"Asking me to conduct the War Requiem for the first time with this great English orchestra was like asking a non-Italian who had never done

*La Traviata* to conduct it in La Scala. But the engineers have produced a marvellous sound on the recording, because the Barbican is — let us say, to be polite — not famous for its acoustics."

The LSO has now asked Nosedà to conduct *Rigoletto* during its residency in Aix-en-Provence next summer. Nosedà relishes that invitation. "In this Verdi repertoire I know so well, I might be able to add a little Italian flavour to their wonderful playing," he says.

But what about a more permanent association with the orchestra? There are already whispers that Nosedà might be a potential successor to the LSO's current principal conductor, Valery Gergiev, who has been Nosedà's mentor since spotting his talent in a conducting masterclass 20 years ago.

Nosedà is far too canny to utter any hopes in that direction, beyond saying that he wants to "deepen" the relationship. "What I want now is to extend my orchestral repertoire," he says. "I've not yet conducted a note of Bruckner, and very little Sibelius."

His current day-job is music director of one of Italy's great opera houses — the Teatro Regio in Turin. Back in 1997 Gergiev appointed Nosedà as principal guest conductor at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. Watching how Gergiev revitalised that venerable institution has clearly influenced how Nosedà runs his own shop in Turin. With lightning speed he has established regular tours to Japan and annual opera-in-concert performances at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. Turin now puts out all its productions on DVD, and Nosedà has also set up a four-way partnership with the publisher Ricordi, the BBC Philharmonic and the British record label Chandos to make recordings of gorgeous but rarely played Italian 20th-century music — by such composers as Casella, Respighi, Dallapiccola and Petrassi.

"There are big funding cuts in Italy," he says. "But in a crisis you have two options: sit and suffer, or rise to the challenge. We decided to compete internationally and to expand by raising much more private money. We are not Americans, but if we can find a balance — say 50-50 public to private finance — we can turn a corner. Turin is a great industrial city: the city of Fiat. But so far the industrialists have been interested only in sponsoring sport: Juventus or Ferrari. I'm meeting lots of them now to persuade them to support opera as well."

We are talking in Milan, the morning after Nosedà opened a new production of Verdi's *Luisa Miller* at La Scala. Though he was born and brought up just three miles from the historic opera house, this is his Scala debut. "*Luisa Miller* has always been regarded as a curse in this theatre," he says. "Always hit by bad luck, always badly received, usually a flop. A few hours before we opened, an Italian journalist said to me: 'Don't you feel the pressure of doing this opera on your La Scala debut?' I replied, 'Thank you for reminding me.'"

If he felt the pressure, he didn't show it. All the Nosedà hallmarks were evident: cracking energy; clean orchestral textures; superb empathy with the singers; and a true Italian relish of drama and contrast. "It was all so vivid," I wrote last autumn after hearing Nosedà's interpretation of the War Requiem. The same was true here. And that whirlwind energy is taking this personable Italian right to the top. **Nosedà conducts the LSO at the Barbican, London EC2 (020-7638 8891), on Thur, and the BBC Philharmonic at the Proms (0845 4015040) on Jul 30**



**In harmony: Gianandrea Nosedà**