

RICHARD BONYNGE

CONDUCTOR

THE GUARDIAN

Wallace: Lurline

Lewis/Silver/Soar/Maxwell/Victorian Opera/Bonyngé (Naxos)

Andrew Clements

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Nowadays the Irish-born composer William Vincent Wallace is remembered, just about, for his first opera, *Maritana*, which was premiered in London in 1845. But in his lifetime the "grand legendary opera" *Lurline*, first performed at Covent Garden in 1860, was widely regarded as Wallace's finest achievement and staged as far afield as Sydney and New York. Since then, though, the work had more or less vanished until Richard Bonyngé prepared the new performing edition that he conducts on this recording.

In fact, most of the score appears to have been composed well before the premiere in the late 1840s; unlike *Maritana*, whose musical flavour is predominantly Italian, Weber and Mendelssohn seem the dominant influences in *Lurline*, though in telling this tale of nymphs and gnomes and castles on the Rhine, Wallace weaves together all these stylistic strands very plausibly. The performances, with Sally Silver as *Lurline*, Keith Lewis as the nobleman Rupert who falls for her, and Roderick Earle as the grumpy gnome, are much more than adequate too; altogether it's a real rarity that's a must at bargain price for anyone interested in 19th-century opera.

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