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Maria Callas

Cavalleria Rusticana

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What I think instantly strikes you is that in the rather conventional opening passage of Santuzza's distress you seem to be hearing the music sung for the first time. Callas is an exceptional artist in this creative artistry if in nothing else. Elena Nicolai (Decca) makes it sound very ordinary; "just another of Santuzza's tearful moments". Milanov (H.M.V.) sings it most touchingly, with a couple of really beautiful high notes. Whether Callas's interpretation strikes you as "beautiful" or not, it is arresting. Just as in her *Lucia*, whatever the shortcomings, she suddenly caused you to hear some phrase like "Alfio son tuo" at the opening of the Mad Scene where one had hardly noticed it before, so here in page after page of this durable favourite, the music comes at you characterised, experienced and weighted with an artistry wholly out of the ordinary. Against this you must reckon that quite a number of the notes, in an uneven scale, are overloaded, ill-placed or pinched, with an unpredictable or hooty quality. To ignore these may be easier for some people than others, but to deny them in the wish to canonize a superlative artist and raise her above all criticism seems to me impossible. Enough that she makes the solo "Voi lo sapete" deeply affecting, and the quarrel hair-raising and with the superb amplitude of Maestro Serafin's conception, she makes the Easter Hymn sound as one had forgotten it could sound.

P. H-W., *The Gramophone*, October 1954 - *excerpt*

Transfer notes

For Maria Callas's studio career, 1953 set out a working pattern which must have been deemed successful enough for it to be followed in 1954 in almost exactly the same manner. She recorded five full operas for EMI in both 1953 and 1954, and in each case the "middle" recording was a shorter, single-act work. Appropriately enough, the two shorter works in question are frequently linked together: Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, recorded in June 1954, and the present recording of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, made in June and August, 1953. Three of the soloists appear on both recordings, together with the La Scala orchestra and chorus under Serafin. Yet although they were later paired in reissue format, the two were originally released separately, with *Cavalleria Rusticana* being possibly the first British LP issue to span three sides, with the fourth side left blank and the second disc sold at a lower price.

As with other recordings Callas made in 1953 there was much to be done to improve sound quality. What began as a dull, flat, lifeless recording has, following XR remastering at the assiduous use of the acoustic properties of one of the world's finest opera houses, totally blossomed. Indeed, in side-by-side comparison it's hard to believe the former could possibly have led to the latter. I've done my best to contain occasional peak distortion in the very loudest sections (this is also apparent on EMI's CD issues so I assume is inherent in the master recording itself). This aside, this *Cavalleria* now becomes a wonderful, glowing artefact, a particularly fine recording. **A.R.**

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Mascagni

Cavalleria Rusticana

Maria Callas

Giuseppe di Stefano
Rolando Panerai
Anna Maria Canali
Ebe Ticozzi

Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan
Chorus Master Vittore Veneziani

Conductor Tullio Serafin

Studio recording, 1953



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MASCAGNI CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA
CALLAS, DI STEFANO, LA SCALA, SERAFIN

Mascagni Cavalleria Rusticana

- [1] Prelude (2:32)
- [2] Siciliana (*Turiddu*) (2:33)
- [3] Prelude (*conclusion*) (3:27)
- [4] Coro d'Introduzione (3:06)
- [5] Gli aranci olezzano (*Chorus*) (5:24)
- [6] Dite, mamma Lucia (*Santuzza*) (4:33)
- [7] Il cavallo scalpita (*Alfio*) (3:05)
- [8] Beato voi, compar Alfio (*Lucia*) (0:28)
- [9] Io me ne vado (*Alfio*) - Easter Hymn (7:20)
- [10] Voi lo sapete, o mamma (*Santuzza*) (6:09)
- [11] Tu qui, Santuzza? (*Turiddu*) (3:44)
- [12] Fior di giaggiolo (*Lola*) (3:47)
- [13] No, no, Turiddu (*Santuzza*) (5:26)
- [14] Oh! Il Signore vi manda (*Santuzza*) (3:34)
- [15] Comare Santa (*Alfio*) (1:57)
- [16] Intermezzo sinfonico (3:53)
- [17] A casa, a casa (*Chorus*) (2:52)
- [18] Viva il vino spumeggiante (*Turiddu*) (2:46)
- [19] A voi tutti salute! (*Alfio*) (2:30)
- [20] Compar Alfio! (*Turiddu*) (2:35)
- [21] Mamma, quel vino è generoso (*Turiddu*) (5:44)

Maria Callas - *Santuzza*
Giuseppe di Stefano - *Turiddu*
Rolando Panerai - *Alfio*
Anna Maria Canali - *Lola*
Ebe Ticozzi - *Mamma Lucia*

Chorus & Orchestra of La Scala Tullio Serafin

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XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **Maria Callas**

Mascagni Cavalleria Rusticana
Text: **Giovanni Targiono-Tozzetti**
& **Guido Menasci**
after the short story and play by
Giovanni Verga

Recorded 16-25 June
and 3-4 August, 1953
at Basilica di Sant'Eufemia,
Milan, Italy

First issued in the UK in 1954 as
Columbia LPs 33CXS1182/3

Total duration: **77:25**

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