

Donizetti

Lucia di Lammermoor



One wonders what the radio audience, listening to this broadcast of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, made of it all. *Lucia* was by far the most popular of the *bel canto* operas at the Met and it featured regularly in the broadcast schedules. Between 1932 and 1956 audiences would have heard the light and agile voice of French soprano Lily Pons in the title role 14 times (and on 3 occasions, the equally light American soprano Patrice Munsel), but in December 1956 Maria Callas assumed the role, in her only Met broadcast. Callas was a completely different singer to Pons, and was important in bringing *bel canto* operas into the mainstream of many of the world's opera houses. If Pons brought light virtuosity to the role of *Lucia*, Callas brought dramatic intensity, even if occasionally at the expense of accurate coloratura. Joan Sutherland brought something completely new, the power and stamina of a *helden-soprano*, which she combined with spectacularly accurate and dazzling coloratura.

Joan Sutherland started her career at Covent Garden singing roles such as *Amelia*, *Desdemona* and *Eva* and she could reasonably have been expected to graduate, as she matured, to the heavier Wagnerian roles. Instead her career took a left turn as her husband, conductor and musicologist Richard Bonyngue, persuaded her to make the *bel canto* repertoire her own. She sang Handel's *Samson* at Covent Garden in late 1958, and followed this with a sensational run of performances as *Lucia* in early 1959. Most commentators agreed that this was her breakthrough moment, when she went from being one amongst many (remember she would have been competing for Wagnerian roles with the likes of Birgit Nilsson and Astrid Varnay), into a league of her own. It was not long before she was in demand around the world, and the Italian press dubbed her '*La Stupenda*.' Her Met debut did not occur until 1961 and this broadcast is one of only five performances (all as *Lucia*) in her debut season. The press were bowled over, 'a superlative demonstration of vocalism' said one, 'unimaginably good' said another. If the applause following the Mad Scene is any indication, the audience in the house were equally impressed. A voice the size of Sutherland's carried easily to every seat in the Old Met.

Joan Sutherland would return frequently to the Met until 1987 and not only in *bel canto* operas such as *Norma*, *La Fille du Régiment* and *I Puritani* (these last two opposite Luciano Pavarotti, a frequent collaborator), but also as *Donna Anna* in *Don Giovanni*, all four female leads in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (opposite Plácido Domingo), and *Leonora* in *Il Trovatore* (again opposite Pavarotti).

Sutherland is partnered by American tenor Richard Tucker, halfway through a near thirty year Met career. Tucker was a wonderfully versatile tenor that managements can only dream of. He could sing heavier roles such as *Don José*, *Andrea Chénier*, and *Hoffmann*, as well as lighter ones such as *Rodolfo*, *the Duke of Mantua*, and *Ferrando*. He first sang *Edgardo* in 1949, and it was the only complete opera where he partnered Sutherland, apart from a single *La Traviata* in 1964. This is the first of two broadcasts of the pair of them in this opera. Tucker has more vocal weight than many *Edgardo*s, and this makes him an ideal partner for Sutherland.

American lyric baritone Frank Guarrera sings *Enrico*. Guarrera had a long Met career between 1948 and 1976 singing a wide variety of roles such as *Escamillo*, *Amonasro*, *Valentin* and *Germet*. Greek bass Nicola Moscona sings *Raimondo* in his final Met performance, bringing an end to a distinguished career that began in 1937.

The performance is conducted by Swiss maestro Silvio Varviso. Varviso was a regular at the Met in the 1960s, but had only made his Met debut alongside Sutherland in *Lucia* a few weeks before this broadcast.

Producer's Note

This Metropolitan Opera broadcast has been very well preserved in an excellent taped recording. Beyond a general tweaking of the overall sound and some very mild noise reduction my interventions were few and far between, with just some occasional dropouts and crosstalk to deal with, along with a rather bronchial winter's audience. My source omitted some of Milton Cross's commentaries and as such I've been forced to edit or fade these as best I can whilst preserving a sense of occasion - as this incredible performance certainly was. This new transfer, heard here in Ambient Stereo XR sound, offers the listener a fabulous window on the dawning at the Met of one of the great operatic careers of the second half of the twentieth century - just as another of a slightly earlier age, that of Nicola Moscona, finally comes to an end.

Andrew Rose

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lucia di lammermoor

PACO 141

Joan Sutherland - Lucia
Richard Tucker - Edgardo

Frank Guarrera - Enrico
Nicola Moscona - Raimondo
Robert Nagy - Normanno
Thelma Votipka - Alisa
Charles Anthony - Arturo

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and Chorus
Conducted by **Silvio Varviso**

Live broadcast performance, 1961



CD 1 ACT 1

- 1. Prelude and Opening Chorus (7:37)
- 2. Cruda, funesta smania (6:00)
- 3. Regnava nel silenzio (13:01)
- 4. Sulla tomba che rinsera (12:28)

ACT 2

- 5. Lucia fra poco a te verrà (3:14)
- 6. Il pallor fuesto, orrendo (5:26)
- 6a. Soffriva nel pianto (7:05)

CD 2

- 8. Per poco fra le tenebre (3:24)
- 9. Chi mi frena in tal momento (8:27)
- 10. T'allontana, sciagurato (5:02)

ACT 3

- 12. D'immenso giubilo (1:45)
- 13. Dalle stanze, ove Lucia (5:24)
- 14. Alfin son tua (12:28)
- 15. Spargi d'amaro pianto (5:39)
- 16. Fra poco a me ricovero (8:07)
- 16a. Oh, meschina! oh, fato orrendo! (8:58)

- Radio Ending - Milton Cross (1:32)

CAST

Lucia.....Joan Sutherland
 Edgardo.....Richard Tucker
 Enrico.....Frank Guarrera
 Raimondo.....Nicola Moscona [Last performance]
 Normanno.....Robert Nagy
 Alisa.....Thelma Voripka
 Arturo.....Charles Anthony

METROPOLITAN OPERA ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS

Conductor.....Silvio Variso



PACO 141

XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Joan Sutherland
as Lucia in this production

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Metropolitan Opera, New York

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