

Verdi Il Trovatore

Pristine
XR

"The role of Leonora is one in which I have much admired Mme Callas. Her assumption is that of a great lady, as it should be; and in the two big arias I have heard her phrase the music like a virtuoso violinist with a mastery which marked her off from most other Leonoras of the common sort. Most of that grandeur is evident in this recording. But to enjoy Mme Callas you have—if I may commit ah Irishism—to like her in the first place. If you can accept that half closed throat and the occasional curdling skirls and the sagging beat on the top notes, all will seem magical. She again brings to the most hackneyed music a gift of recreating it as if it were being sung for the first time. She feels the sense of words (as, for example, neither Tebaldi nor Milanov seem to sense them at all). On the other hand, considered from a purely tonal angle, the purely sensuous side of her singing offers little here to compare to the ravishing sounds which issue from the Leonoras of Tebaldi (in "Tacea la notte") or Mme Milanov in the introduction to "D'amor sull' ali". But the actual spanning and placing of the phrases are lovely and in the rapid and difficult caballetta to the former aria Mme Callas, who is far more nippy with her shakes and gruppetti, though sticking to a fairly safe pace, shows up as a much more practised coloratura singer than either of her rivals. In the scene with the count which comes after the Miserere, Mme Callas is altogether astonishing in her realisation of the drama in her dynamic phrasing, making her rivals sound merely like also rans in a steeple chase. "Mira d'acerbe lagrime" and the vengeful glee of "Vivra! Contend il giubilo" are perfectly in character. Altogether, provided you like Mme Callas's strange vocal production, you are likely to forget the other two "complete" Leonoras. Only in one place does she a little disappoint me; that is her moment of amazement in the Convent scene, "E deggio — e posso crederlo?", not nearly as thrilling as expected. But the working up of the ensemble thereafter is exceptionally clear in this new issue. Indeed I do not recall a *Trovatore* in which so many of the words came through so clearly...

...But what of Herbert von Karajan's handling of the score as a whole? Well, I find it superior to Erede (Decca), who sounds laggard and cautious by comparison. But the excitements are not always of a very Verdian kind and von Karajan often seems to drive the singers without at the same time achieving that justifiable rightness that we associate with Toscanini's Verdi. Cellini in the H.M.V. did one or two questionable things, but von Karajan often whips up the tempo in a way which seems to have no warrant in the score or the nature of the music, as if he simply felt that here was a place where the orchestra might as well assert itself. Equally some of the *ralentandos* sound, not natural, but grudgingly exaggerated, as if a concession to an absurd fashion. There are few untidy passages. Superficially at least it is a "hot" performance and I don't expect most listeners to share my reserve in this matter of the true Verdian style not being achieved." - *The Gramophone*, November 1957

"That Callas/Karajan *Il trovatore* has long been one of the great Verdi recordings" - so wrote Richard Osbourne in Gramophone in 2014, and yet until now it has remained the case that the sound quality EMI/Columbia were offering from these mid-50s mono opera recordings was still significantly behind that of their chief rival, Decca. Once again in this critically-acclaimed series, Pristine's Ambient Stereo XR remastering has significantly transformed the sound quality and listening experience of one of the great Callas opera recordings, bringing to it new life and the wonderfully rich and vibrant sound that was too often lacking in the original. - *Andrew Rose*



verdi il trovatore



disc one

ACT ONE

1. *Scene 1* - All'erta! All'erta! (2:59)
2. Di due figli vivea padre beato (0:45)
3. Abbieta zingara, fosca vegliarda! (3:35)
4. Brevi e tristi giorni visse (1:57)
5. Sull'orlo dei tetti (1:22)
6. *Scene 2* - Che più t'arresti? (2:16)
7. Tacea la notte placida (3:34)
8. Quanto narrasti di turbamento m'ha piena l'alma! (0:50)
9. Di tale amor (1:40)
10. Tace la notte! (1:49)
11. Il Trovator! Io fremo! Deserto sulla terra (1:42)
12. Anima mia! Più dell'usato (2:02)
13. Di geloso amor sprezzato (2:44)

ACT TWO

14. *Scene 1* - Vedi! le fosche notturne spoglie (2:57)
15. Stride le vampa! (2:40)
16. Mesta è la tua canzon! (2:01)
17. Sol or siamo (1:01)
18. Condotta ell'era in ceppi (4:51)
19. Non son tuo figlio! (2:28)
20. Mal reggendo all'aspro assalto (3:08)
21. L'usato messo Ruiz invia! (1:26)
22. Perigliarti ancor languente (2:33)
23. *Scene 2* - Tutto è deserto (1:35)
24. Il balen del suo sorriso (3:15)
25. Qual suono! Oh ciel! (0:51)
26. Per me ora fatale (2:51)
27. Ah! se l'error t'ingombra (2:02)
28. Perchè piangete? O dolci amiche (2:16)
29. E deggio e posso crederlo? (4:47)

disc two

ACT THREE

1. *Scene 1* - Or co' dadi, ma fra poco (4:26)
2. In braccio al mio rival! (2:12)
3. Giorni poveri vivea (3:08)
4. Deh! rallentate, o barbari (2:10)
5. *Scene 2* - Quale d'armi fragor (2:02)
6. Ah sì, ben mio, coll'essere io tuo (2:53)
7. L'onda de' suoni mistici pura discenda al cor! (1:29)
8. Di quella pira, l'orrendo foco (3:23)

ACT FOUR

9. *Scene 1* - Siam giunti; oecco la torre (3:04)
10. D'amor sull'ali rosee (4:02)
11. Misere, Quel suon, quelle preci (7:26)
12. Udiste? (1:47)
13. Mira, d'acerbe lagrime (2:19)
14. Conte! Né basti! (1:13)
15. Colui vivrà, Vivrà! Contende il giubilo (2:28)
16. *Scene 2* - Madre, no dormi? (5:29)
17. Sì, la stanchezza m'opprime (1:18)
18. Ai nostri monti ritorneremo (2:05)
19. Che! Non m'inganna (1:08)
20. Parlar non vuoi? Ha quest'infame l'amor venduto (3:00)
21. Ti scosta! (1:06)
22. Prima che d'altri vivere (3:33)

CAST

MARIA CALLAS Leonora
FEDORA BARBIERI Azucena
NICOLA ZACCARIA Ferrando
RENATO ERCOLANI Ruiz/Un messo

ROLANDO PANERAI Il conte di Luna
GIUSEPPE DI STEFANO Manrico
LUISA VILLA Ines
GIULIO MAURI Uno zingaro

Coro e Orchestra de Teatro alla Scala, Milano
Chorus master: Norberto Mola

conducted by Herbert von Karajan

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Maria Callas as Leonora in 1950

Producer: Walter Legge
Engineer: Robert Beckett
Recorded 3-9 August, 1956
Teatro alla Scala, Milan

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CD1: 67:56
CD2: 61:41

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