

Donizetti

Lucia di Lammermoor

This release celebrates the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Giuseppe Di Stefano (24 July 1921 – 3 March 2008), certainly one of the greatest tenors of the twentieth century. It fills an odd gap in his discography in that all but one of his complete studio opera sets is now available in “official” transfers – the ones with Callas in Warner’s complete box devoted to the soprano, the EMI Traviata with Antonietta Stella on Testament, and his Deccas in another complete box from that label – except for his stereo remake of *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

This lone item had originally been recorded by the Mercury Records team (Wilma Cozart Fine, producer; Harold Lawrence, musical supervisor; and Robert Fine, balance engineer) as part of a series made in Italy for the music publisher Ricordi, which included a Callas set of Cherubini’s *Medea* (reissued in the Warner box) and a *Rigoletto* with Bastiannini (Pristine PACO 184). It originally came out on Mercury, but the rights stayed with Ricordi, who would later license it out to labels as disparate as Deutsche Grammophon in Europe and the bargain-basement Everest Opera Series in the USA.

Ricordi itself published the first (and only authorized) CD version in 1988, which was from various reports an unsatisfactory affair that had only four tracks for the entire set – one for each original LP side! Since then, it has appeared on a variety of independent labels, sometimes in mono (although it was a stereo original), at other times identified as a live performance (which it wasn’t) and usually in transfers which, according to reviewers, betrayed their LP origins with thumps, clicks and off-center pitch wow.

This set’s dismal reissue history coincides with a mixed critical reception. While Bastiannini is universally singled out for praise for his Enrico, the contributions of the other performers have received wildly divergent notices. Although some claim that Di Stefano was past his prime when he made this recording, *Fanfare*’s Lynn René Bayley, citing a contemporaneous Italian and French aria recital Di Stefano made for Decca, writes that “1959 was a good year for him, in fact his last really good one.” Indeed, while there is some hardness to his tone in some of louder passages, one doesn’t hear the strain and intonation problems that are present on some of his recordings from a few years earlier (for example, “Cielo e mar” in his 1957 complete *Gioconda*), even at the punishingly high pitch La Scala was using at the time of this *Lucia* (around A4=449 Hz, verified by the 50 Hz mains hum I removed from the original recording).

Even the sound of the original recording itself, though made by the legendary Mercury team, has come under some criticism. Reviewing the Ricordi CD made from the master tapes, *Fanfare*’s Robert Levine wrote that the “sound is excellent in a big, forward way, but it has no atmosphere at all – it sounds like the worst of digital, although I don’t think digital recording is the problem.” While transferring this, I noticed that while the recording was clear and had good stereo separation, it was also rather dry and close-up, magnifying the occasional harshness of the singing. Through re-equalization and the addition of a modest amount of digital reverb, I’ve tried to ameliorate some of these issues. (I also corrected some channel imbalances and removed hum, studio noises, and the sound of traffic outside the theater.) Whatever one thinks of the performance as a whole, I hope you will agree that it has never sounded better than it does here.

Mark Obert-Thorn

donizetti lucia di lammermoor

PACO 186

lucia – renata scotto
edgardo – giuseppe di stefano
enrico – etto bastiannini
raimondo – ivo vinco

alisa – stefania malagù
arturo – franco ricciardi
normanno – n. n.

orchestra and chorus of teatro alla scala
conducted by nino sanzognò

stereo studio recording, 1959



donizetti

lucia di lammermoor

disc one (53:40)

1. Preludio (2:32)

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

2. Percorrete ... Percorriamo le spiagge vicine (2:24)
3. Tu sei turbato! ... E n'ho ben d'onde (2:51)
4. Cruda, funesta smania (2:08)
5. Il tuo dubbio è amai certezza ... Come vinti da stanchezza (2:11)
6. La pietade in suo favore (1:38)

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

7. Ancor non giunse? (4:10)
8. Regnava nel silenzio alta la notte e bruna (4:17)
9. Quando rapito in estasi (3:37)
10. Egli s'avanza ... Lucia perdona se ad ora inusitata (2:37)
11. Sulla tomba che rinsera il tradito genitore (3:06)
12. Qui di sposa eternal fede ... Ah, soltanto il nostro foco (2:18)
13. Verranno a te sull'aure i miei sospiri ardenti (4:23)

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

14. Lucia fra poco a te verrà ... Tremante l'aspetto (3:13)
15. Appressati, Lucia ... Il pallor funesto, orrendo (5:16)
16. Soffriva nel pianto ... Un folle t'accese (3:29)
17. Che fia? ... Suonar di giubilo (1:29)
18. Se tradirmi tu potrai ... Tu che vedi il pianto mio (2:01)

disc two (58:18)

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

1. Per te d'immenso giubilo ... Per poco fra le tenebre (3:30)
2. Dov'è Lucia? ... Qui giungere or la vedrem (4:02)
3. Chi me frena in tal momento (3:32)
4. T'allontana, sciagurato ... Rispettate in me di Dio (1:14)
5. Sconsigliato! In queste porte chi ti guida? (2:00)
6. Esci, fuggi, il furor che mi accende (1:59)

ACT THREE, SCENE ONE

7. D'immenso giubilo s'innalzi un grido (2:22)
8. Dalle stanze ove Lucia tratta avea col suo consorte (2:28)
9. Oh! Qual funesto avvenimento! (2:55)
10. Il dolce suono mi colpi di sua voce! (6:10)
11. Ardon gli incensi (7:58)
12. Spargi d'amaro pianto (3:40)

ACT THREE, SCENE TWO

13. Tombe degli avi miei (4:06)
14. Fra poco a me ricovero darà negletto avello (3:16)
15. Oh, meschina! Oh, fato orrendo! (4:19)
16. Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali (4:47)

Orchestra and Chorus of Teatro alla Scala
conducted by Nino Sanzogno

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: **Mark Obert-Thorn**

Cover artwork based on photographs of Giuseppe Di Stefano and Renata Scotto as Edgardo and Lucia
Recorded 25 August – 1 September 1959 in the Teatro alla Scala, Milan

Total duration: 1hr 51:56