

Verdi

Un ballo in maschera

Pristine
XR

"This reissue of Ballo is a welcome reminder of the special qualities of its principals. As JBS intimated when it last appeared on LP (6/79), Votto has been under-rated as its conductor: his direction has a truly Verdian *élan*. This is one of Callas's most compelling assumptions. Certain phrases, such as when she sings "Son di lui", - "I am his" meaning her husband's to Riccardo - remain uniquely accented and convincing. Her Amelia does have more character, presence and sheer *spinto* quality than that of either soprano on the rival sets. Gobbi is a very different Renato than Bruson, who appears for both Solti (Decca) and Abbado (DG); more incisive, more threatening, but by the same token, rather less smooth in his vocalization; for an ideal "Eri tu", I would want to go far further back in recorded history, to Amato and de Luca. Where Riccardo is concerned, I suppose di Stefano is closer to Pavarotti (Solti) than to Domingo (Abbado) in giving face to the role. He hasn't so secure a top register as either of his rivals, but my goodness, in the ballata and the love duet he does surpass them both in the involvement and daring of his performance; indeed, I think all three principals are superior to their successors in creating the tension of a live performance as against a studio one. In that respect this is the recording! have always turned to most often, even though in my heart I would have to admit that the Abbado is the more finished and better-produced set. I should add that Barbieri makes a vivid and resourceful Ulrica and Ratti a smiling, pert, if sometimes shrill Oscar.

The DG is, of course, also the more comfortably recorded, although I would suggest that, in its CD manifestation, the EMI is more than respectable in terms of sound. Callas enthusiasts will want this version in any case. Others may find the choice more difficult depending on whether they value the character of individual performances over all-round finish. My own preference is clear; it is for this EMI set." - A.B., *The Gramophone*, September 1987

As we continue our journey through the studio opera recordings made by Maria Callas in the 1950s, in *Un ballo in maschera* we reach the last of a continuous run of mono opera studio recordings - presented here in Pristine's Ambient Stereo format which, whilst maintaining the central mono sound image, brings space, air and ambience around that image for a more realistic and comfortable listening experience.

Where its major rival, Decca, had pioneered the stereo format, beginning in 1954 despite no domestic reproduction equipment yet offering the new sound, EMI was once again a couple of years or more behind its British counterpart. And whilst the standard of sound engineering was audibly better with each visit to Milan's La Scala Theatre for the annual round of Maria Callas recordings, it still lagged behind the pioneering work of Kenneth Wilkinson and his colleagues at Decca.

This recording nevertheless resides at the sonic peak of the end of the mono era, greatly easing my own work in transforming its sound, through the XR remastering process, into the truly beautiful artefact presented here.

Andrew Rose



verdi

un ballo in maschera

disc one (50:52)

ACT ONE

1. Prelude (4:13)

SCENE ONE

2. Posa in pace (1:35)
3. S'avanza il Conte (3:38)
4. Il cenno mio de là (2:28)
5. Alla vita che t'arride (2:49)
6. Il primo giudice (1:30)
7. Cavatina: Volta la terrea (1:47)
8. Signori oggi d'Ulrica...Orni cura si doni al diletto (3:09)

SCENE TWO

9. Zitti, l'incanto non dessi turbare (4:01)
10. Arrivo il primo...Villano, dà indietro (2:29)
11. Su fatemi largo (3:25)
12. Che v'agita così (5:24)
13. Su profetessa monta il treppie (4:07)
14. Chi voi siate l'audace parola (5:50)
15. Finale - Finisci il vaticinio (4:27)

disc two (79:46)

ACT TWO

1. Prelude - Ecco l'orrido campo (9:04)
2. Teco io sto...Gran Dio (9:27)
3. Ahimè!...s'appressa alcun! (5:03)
4. Seguitemi!...Mio Dio! (7:39)

ACT THREE, SCENE ONE

5. A tal colpo è nulla il pianto (6:46)
6. Alzati! Là tuo figlio a te concede riveder (6:09)
7. Siam soli...udite (8:47)
8. Il messaggio entri (3:48)

ACT THREE, SCENE TWO

9. Forse la soglia attinse (5:20)
10. Ah! Dessa è là (1:38)
11. Fervono amori e danze (5:39)
12. Ah! Perché qui!.. fuggite (5:52)
13. Finale - Ella è pura, in braccio a morte (4:34)

CAST

Amelia - Maria Callas
Riccardo - Giuseppe Di Stefano
Renato - Tito Gobbi
Ulrica - Fedora Barbieri
Oscar - Eugenia Ratti
Silvano - Ezio Giordano
Samuel - Silvio Maionica
Tom - Nicola Zaccaria
Giudice/Servo - Renato Ercolani

Coro e Orchestra del
Teatro alla Scala, Milano

chorus master:
Norberto Mola

conductor:
Antonino Votto

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XR Remastered by **Andrew Rose**

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Maria Callas and Giuseppe Di Stefano in *Un Ballo In Maschera*, 1957
Recorded at Teatro alla Scala, Milan, 4 - 9 September 1956

Total duration: 2hr 10:38