

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PACO 098

TOSCANINI

conducts *La Traviata*

PRISTINE
AUDIO
XR

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PACO 098

PRISTINE
AUDIO
XR

The Toscanini *Traviata*—that is how one thinks of it—is a recording of the N.B.C. broadcast of December, 1946, and the first ever to be made by him of a complete opera. One can only hope that others will follow and in particular the *Falstaff*, of which I have heard enough to make me want to hear it all. No doubt some boosting of tone has been done by the engineers, but no amount of skill can disguise the deadness of the N.B.C. Victor studio in which the broadcast took place. It is, as I have suggested, a “convention” that has to be accepted for the privilege of hearing the great man at work. I have a feeling that the singers were somewhat intimidated by the occasion. Licia Albanese hardly sounds gay in her greeting to her guests in the opening scene and takes some time to get into her stride. Jan Peerce exhibits a fine voice and some fervour, but little sense of style. The chorus are less inhibited, and gradually things begin to warm up! Albanese sings through the rests in “*Estrano*” and fails to move me in the first half of her aria, though she gets some hectic gaiety into the *Cabaletta*. Twice in this section, by the way, a male voice is heard to join in at the words “*a diletti*” can this be the *maestro* himself? ...

I have deliberately made little allusion until now to the conductor, but of course the opera is Toscanini's. The Preludes to the first and third acts are, as might be predicted, superbly done and when Verdi writes, as in the introduction to the first act, *Allegro brillantissimo e molto vivace*, that, and just that, is what we get. One of the finest things Toscanini does is the long *crescendo*, in the chorus after the waltz in this act, from *pp* to *ff*, a matter of eight pages of vocal score, and an example of magnificent control of chorus and orchestra.

Equally fine is the brilliant introduction to the second finale of the second act and the playing of the all-pervading figure in F minor as Alfredo gambles. At times a slight, and heretical, doubt arises as to whether the score is not somewhat overplayed for its significance; and certainly one wonders how a conductor who articulates every note with such care can tolerate anything but the most distinguished singing to match his art.

Review by Alec Robertson, *The Gramophone*, December 1951 - excerpts, HMV 78rpm issue

Producer's Note

Toscanini's broadcast recordings of *La Traviata* spanned two live transmissions a week apart in December 1946, and that is how we've split them here: first Act 1 and Act 2, Scene 1, then Act 2, Scene 2 and Act 3. The pace is certainly brisk - some twenty minutes quicker than Callas under Santini in 1953 - yet Toscanini's brilliantly-drilled musicians bring it off with aplomb. As with most of Toscanini's NBC broadcasts of this era, the original sound has been well-preserved. It's no great surprise to find Gramophone's reviewer baulking at the Studio 8-H acoustics; as a part of this remastering, which has greatly improved the overall sound quality, I've also made judicious use of the reverberant profile of one of the world's great opera houses, a technique which greatly aids the projection and enhances the enjoyment of the singers here who, as a result, probably deserve something of a reappraisal.

Andrew Rose

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
SARL Pristine Audio, 144 Rue de l'Eglise, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France

TOSCANINI

Licia Albanese
Jan Peerce
Robert Merrill
Maxine Stellman
John Garris
George Cehanovsky
Paul Dennis
Arthur Newman
Johanne Moreland

NBC Orchestra and Chorus
Chorus Director: Peter Willhousky
Conductor: Arturo Toscanini

Verdi

La Traviata

LIVE BROADCAST RECORDINGS, 1946

VERDI *La Traviata*

- 1 Prelude (3:31)
 2 Act 1 - Dell'invito trascorsa (4:44)
 3 Libiamo, ne' lieti calici (2:54)
 4 Che è ciò? (2:18)
 5 Un di felice, eterea (5:18)
 6 È strano! È strano! (2:57)
 7 Follie! follie! (4:03)
 8 Act 2 Scene 1 - Lunge da lei (1:30)
 9 De' miei bollenti spiriti (1:37)
 10 Annina, dionde vieni? (3:46)
 11 Pura siccome un angelo (5:40)
 12 Dite alla giovine (7:59)
 13 Dammi tu forza, o cielo! (3:24)
 14 Ah, vive sol quel core all'amor mio! (2:01)
 15 Di Provenza il mar, il suol (4:35)
- 16 Act 2 Scene 2 - Avram lieta di maschere la notte (6:28)
 17 Alfredo! Voi! (7:43)
 18 Di sprezzo degno (5:47)
 19 Act 3 - Prelude (3:39)
 20 Annina? Comandate? (4:16)
 21 Teneste la promessa (3:47)
 22 Largo al quadrupede (0:44)
 23 Signora! Che t'accade? (1:37)
 24 Parigi, o cara (7:03)
 25 Ah Violetta! (5:57)

Violetta Valery *Licia Albanese* Baron Douphol *George Cehanovsky*
 Alfredo Germont *Jan Peerce* Marquis d'Obigny *Paul Dennis*
 Giorgio Germont *Robert Merrill* Dr. Grenvil *Arthur Newman*
 Flora Bervoix *Maxine Steelman* Annina *Johanne Moreland*
 Gastone *John Garris*

NBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus
Chorus Director *Peter Willhousky*

Conductor *Arturo Toscanini*

XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **Toscanini**

VERDI *La Traviata*
Broadcast performances
CD1: 1 December, 1946
CD2: 8 December, 1946
NBC Studio 8-H
New York City
First issued as RCA LM-6003

Total duration: **1hr 43:18**

For a full catalogue visit
www.pristineclassical.com
or call : (00) 33 979 622713

© 2013 **Pristine Audio**

PRISTINE
AUDIO