

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PACO 113

MARIA CALLAS
Puccini - Madama Butterfly

Pristine
XR

"E un immensa piet " ("it's heartbreaking"), says Sharpless near the end of *Butterfly*, and in the most direct sense those were my sentiments as I listened to this set. As it progresses Callas and Karajan raise what is so often a mere tear-jerker into the deep tragedy Puccini surely intended, reminding us what a masterly score this is. Indeed my well-seasoned and wary ears were quite overwhelmed by the experience. If I knew someone who doubted the validity of opera as music-drama I would sit him down to listen to the last twenty minutes of this set, text in hand, to receive an object-lesson in what it is all about. From the false happiness of "E qui, e qui!" through the stunned empty tone of "forse potrei cader morta sull'attimo" and the expansive generosity of "sotto il gran ponte del cielo" to the searing intensity of the suicide and Karajan's heartrending last chord, the performance is quite tremendous.

But there is more, much more to Callas's interpretation, and I could quote enough examples of her penetrating vision of what *Butterfly* means to fill the rest of the page. Let me suggest but three: the way she suggests at "Ieri son salita tutta sola in segreto" (Act I) all Cio-Cio-San's absolute faith in following her destiny and forsaking her religion, the gentle simplicity of "Mio marito m'lia pro- messo" and, a little later in Act 2, at the end of "Che tua madre" the impending tragedy of the repeated "Mortal". Callas made this set when she was at the absolute peak of her vocal form, and she is the mistress of every vocal change needed to express *Butterfly*'s changing mood, even to the white, little-girl timbre she uses in the first act, which sometimes sounds too twee; that and the sour D flat at the end of the Entrance are my only adverse criticisms of her interpretation.

A.B., *Gramophone*, May 1976 - (excerpt, EMI LP reissue review)

Producer's Note

The 1955 Callas/Karajan EMI recording of *Madama Butterfly* is rightly regarded as one of the all-time classics. As the legendary Alan Blyth pointed out in his 1976 review of an LP reissue, it finds Callas at their "absolute peak of her vocal form" with taut, through-conceived support from Karajan "at every turn of the drama". However, Blyth also noted a number of technical short-comings: "recorded sound that is less than lustrous", a "confined" acoustic, "the occasional sound of studio movement" and "some momentary signs of overloading". To these I would add inconsistent tape speeds leading to drifting pitch, background rumble interspersed with accelerating traffic, and a general sense of a thin veil hanging over the sound. All of these are as present in the most recent 24-bit Callas box set transfers as they were in 1976, or in 1955 - and each has been addressed for this new Pristine XR release. The enclosed acoustic has opened out beautifully here, with a clarity and openness that brings new life to the recording. Ambient Stereo, coupled with the lightest touch of convolution reverberation, which models the real acoustic of one of the world's foremost opera houses, adds a final sprinkle of magic to a sound that might now indeed be called "lustrous". Never has this classic *Butterfly* ever sounded as good! **Andrew Rose**

FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM
SARL Pristine Audio, 144 Rue de l'Eglise, 24610 St. M  ard de Gur  on, France

Pristine
XR
PACO 113

Maria Callas
Puccini's
**MADAMA
BUTTERFLY**

NICOLAI GEDDA
MARIO BORRIELLO
LUCIA DANIELI
RENATO ERCOLANI
MARIO CARLIN
PLINIO CLABASSI
ENRICO CAMPI
LUISA VILLA

ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS OF LA SCALA MILAN
HERBERT VON KARAJAN

EMI studio recording, 1955



- CD1**
- 1 **Act 1 - E soffitto...e pareti** (2:09)
 - 2 **Questa è la cameriera** (4:14)
 - 3 **Dovunque al mondo** (4:15)
 - 4 **Quale amania vi prende!** (4:00)
 - 5 **Ah! Ah! quanto cielo!...Ancora un passo or via** (3:00)
 - 6 **Gran ventura** (3:40)
 - 7 **L'imperial Commissario** (2:29)
 - 8 **Vieni, amor mio!** (2:38)
 - 9 **Ieri son salita tutta sola** (5:05)
 - 10 **Ed eccoci in famiglia** (5:33)
 - 11 **Viene la sera** (3:21)
 - 12 **Bimba dagli occhi pieni di malia** (3:38)
 - 13 **Vogliatemi bene, un bene piccolino** (7:35)

- 14 **Act 2 - E izaghi e Izanami** (7:14)
 - 15 **Un bel di vedremo** (4:35)
- CD2**
- 1 **C'è Entrate** (3:31)
 - 2 **Non lo sapete insomma** (1:53)
 - 3 **A voi però giurerei fede costante** (3:33)
 - 4 **Or a noi** (6:08)
 - 5 **E questo e questo** (2:25)
 - 6 **Che tua madre dovrà** (3:32)
 - 7 **Io scendo al piano** (1:43)
 - 8 **Vespa! Rospo maledetto!** (2:00)
 - 9 **Una nave da guerra** (2:31)
 - 10 **Scuoti quella fronda di ciliegio** (5:13)
 - 11 **Or vienmi ad adornar** (5:09)
 - 12 **Coro a bocca chiusa** (2:58)
 - 13 **Oh eh! Oh eh! Oh eh!** (7:26)
 - 14 **Già il sole!** (2:01)
 - 15 **Povera Butterfly!** (2:48)
 - 16 **Io so che alle sue ...Oh! l'amara fragranza** (4:02)
 - 17 **Addio, fiorito** (1:54)
 - 18 **Glielo dirai...Premetto** (2:14)
 - 19 **Che vuol da me** (5:40)
 - 20 **Come una mosca prigioniera** (2:53)
 - 21 **Con onor muore** (5:18)

PUCCINI *Madama Butterfly*

Maria Callas - Butterfly
Nicolai Gedda - Pinkerton
Mario Borriello - Sharpless
Lucia Danieli - Suzuki
Renato Ercolani - Goro
Mario Carlin - Yamadori
Plinio Clabassi - Lo zio Bonzo
Enrico Campi - Il commissario imperiale
Luisa Villa - Kate Pinkerton

Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala Milan
Herbert von Karajan, conductor

XR remastering by Andrew Rose
 Cover artwork based on a photograph of Maria Callas

Recorded Teatro alla Scala, Milan, 1-6 August, 1955
 Originally issued as Columbia 33CX1296-8

Total duration: 2hr 18:18

www.pristineclassical.com
 © 2014 Pristine Audio

PRISTINE
AUDIO