

## RENATA TEBALDI in Puccini's *Tosca*

Pristine  
XR

# Renata Tebaldi in **TOSCA**

PACO 121

Although this *Tosca*, marking the début of Renata Tebaldi during the regular course of a Covent Garden season, was one of the most important events of the year, there is not a great deal new to be said about it. Tebaldi's *Tosca*, Tagliavini's Cavaradossi, Gobbi's Scarpia—all are well known, though this was in fact the first time that the trio had appeared in the same performance. Expectations were keyed so high that to confess to some disappointment hardly matters. The important thing is that this *Tosca* was as good, on the whole, as it can be today.

The whole performance was wonderfully free from any touch of vocal vulgarity. Tagliavini's tones are seldom thrilling, but he gave a vigorous and intelligent account of Cavaradossi. Gobbi's Scarpia was immensely imposing; if the *Te Deum* was not quite the overwhelming thing it can be, this was due partly to an ill-adjusted balance of the various forces of orchestra, choir organ and bells. Francesco Molinari-Pradelli supported each singer along his chosen path with well-nourished tone and he made much of the big orchestral climaxes. Christopher West's production was a muddle of the conventional and the unfortunate. The sacristan fidgeted about and actually crossed in front of the tenor during 'Recondita armonia.' A priest started to sway in time to the *Te Deum*. Three junior *Toscas* suddenly put in an appearance! The execution was managed with a striking shadow effect which might serve well in a modern German production of something else, but was hopelessly out of context in this particular performance and merely distracted attention from the principals. When *Tosca* gave Spoletta a tiny push and then gingerly mounted the rampart—to disappear behind the wall, not jump—there was an alarming suggestion of *revue*; but, Tebaldi's B flat soon corrected that impression!

AP, Opera Magazine, August 1955 (Excerpt from review of the opening performance given 28 June, 1955 - see full review online)

### Producer's Note

Renata Tebaldi's debut season at London's Covent Garden began on 28 June 1955 with her singing the title role in Puccini's *Tosca*. Perhaps fearing opening night nerves or mistakes, the BBC opted for the performance two nights later for their live broadcast from the Royal Opera House. Despite Robert Levine noted in a *Classics Today* review that noted the "blaring but acceptable" AM-quality sound of a previous issue, he gushed: "*Tebaldi's voice is remarkably fresh and secure, with all five high Cs in place and offering no problems; the registers are perfectly knit and the sound grand, beautiful, and womanly ... If you love Tebaldi you'll adore her here in this gloriously sung and very committed reading ... Tito Gobbi of course is sui generis. From his opening, snarling statement in church, through his lascivious, sneering, "Ebbene" and disgusting "Tosca, finalmente mia" and even beyond, he terrifies.*" We are fortunate that an anonymous music lover commissioned a studio with disc-cutting equipment and a suitable VHF receiver that night to record the live transmission onto a set of 33rpm acetate disc sides, as this remarkable new find (via a 1/4" tape dub) has proved to be immeasurably superior in sound quality to the previously reviewed recording, and proved to be a superb source for this new XR remastered release - especially as FM broadcasting had begun less than two months previously in the UK. It's not perfect: a handful of minor patches were necessary where damage or small side-change gaps left "holes" in the material; sound quality tends to drop off towards the end of disc sides too. But these minor issues pale into insignificance by comparison to the radical improvement in sound quality to be heard here, with a full, realistic, clear and vibrant sound almost throughout. Magnificent! **Andrew Rose**

by Giacomo Puccini  
Live recording, Covent Garden, 1955

Flora Tosca - Renata Tebaldi  
Mario Cavaradossi - Ferruccio Tagliavini  
Il barone Scarpia - Tito Gobbi  
Cesare Angelotti - Michael Langdon  
Sacristan - Howell Glynne  
Spoletta - David Tree  
Sciarrone - Ronald Lewis  
Gaoler - Rhydderch Davies  
Shepherd - Noreen Berry

The Covent Garden Opera Chorus and Orchestra - Francesco Molinari-Pradelli

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PUCCHINI *Tosca*

- CD 1
- 1 ACT 1 - Ah! Finalmente! (5:27)
  - 2 Dammi i colori - Recondita armonia (4:07)
  - 3 Gente là dentro! (1:09)
  - 4 Mario! Mario! Mario! (6:56)
  - 5 Ah, quegli occhi - Quale occhio al mondo può star di paro (5:07)
  - 6 È buona la mia Tosca (5:22)
  - 7 Un tal baccano in chiesa! (3:47)
  - 8 Tutto è chiaro (3:02)
  - 9 Ed io venivo a lui tutta dogliosa (4:07)
  - 10 Tre sbirri, una carrozza (4:33)

- CD 2
- 1 ACT 2 - Tosca è un buon falco! (2:56)
  - 2 Ha più forte (2:20)
  - 3 Meno male! (3:09)
  - 4 Dov'è dunque Angelotti? (1:54)
  - 5 Ed or fra noi parliam da buoni amici (3:51)
  - 6 Orsù, Tosca, parlate (3:10)
  - 7 Basta, Roberti (1:34)
  - 8 Nel pozzo, Del giardino (3:51)
  - 9 Se la giurata fede debbo tradir (3:49)
  - 10 Vissi d'arte (4:01)
  - 11 Vedi, le man giunte io stendo a te! (3:32)
  - 12 E qual via scegliete? (6:18)

- 13 ACT 3 - Io de' sospiri (4:54)
- 14 Mario Cavaradossi? A voi (2:55)
- 15 E lucevan le stelle (4:10)
- 16 Ah! Franchigia a Floria Tosca (2:39)
- 17 O dolci mani mansuete e pure (5:01)
- 18 E non giungono (2:35)
- 19 Com'è lunga l'attesa! (2:22)
- 20 Presto! Su, Mario! Mario! Su! Presto! Andiam! (1:38)

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a  
photograph of Renata TebaldiPuccini Tosca  
FM Broadcast recording  
BBC Home Service  
Royal opera House  
Covent Garden, London  
30 June, 1955

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