



Fausto Cleva

conducts Verdi - Otello



Verdi's penultimate opera, as Milton Cross notes in his introductory comments, requires three principals of the highest calibre. Drawn from Shakespeare's play, and with the playwright's complex characterisation underpinning the opera, Otello needs a tenor who is both heroic yet capable of tenderness, a soprano who is a paragon of virtue yet also strong when confronted with false accusations levelled against her, and a baritone whose inner monologue stands in complete contrast to his public face. On the stage the singers convey these emotions visually and vocally, but, as we can judge from this radio broadcast, the very best singers can do it by voice alone.

Mario Del Monaco was pre-eminent Otello in the world's leading opera houses between the mid 1950s and the early 1960s. His bright and virile tone possesses just the right amount of heroism for the dramatic parts of the score, and the listener is quickly confident that he will deliver all the role's show-stopping high notes with ease. Yet for a tenor with something of a reputation for a 'stand and deliver' style, he is evidently capable of scaling back his voice to suit the various moods of the role. The Act 1 love duet contains some very restrained singing as he blends his voice with our Desdemona, Victoria de los Angeles, and the anguish of the final moments of Act 4 are beautifully conveyed. Otello was one of Del Monaco's favourite roles, he starred in many European productions and made two commercial recordings for Decca. At the Met he featured in three matinee broadcasts of the opera.

This broadcast is a very rare appearance as Desdemona for Spanish soprano Victoria De Los Angeles. She sang the role only four times at the Met, being far more commonly heard as Mimi, Butterfly and Marguerite, and this is the only known broadcast of her in the role. Yet her liquid and creamy soprano is ideally suited to Desdemona, infusing the role with a touching sense of injured innocence. The heart of the role is the Ave Maria at the start of Act 4 and rarely has it been sung with more beauty of tone and tenderness.

Iago was one of Leonard Warren's signature roles. He featured in no less than seven matinee broadcasts in the role between 1946 and 1958, as well as an opening night telecast in 1948. Iago cannot simply be a scheming villain, the singer has to also be a credible friend and confidant to Otello, and Warren is able to use his flexible instrument to great effect in the role. His whispering into Otello's ear in Act 2 is a masterclass in intelligent singing. Warren was the Met's leading baritone in Italian opera from his debut in 1939 to his sudden death on stage during a performance of La Forza del Destino in 1960.

Conductor Fausto Cleva was born in Italy but emigrated to the US as a young man. He joined the musical staff of the Metropolitan Opera in 1931 as chorus-master and répétiteur, and eventually graduated to become one of the house conductors in 1950. From then, until his death in 1971, he conducted almost one thousand Met performances, concentrating on Italian opera. Perhaps because of his long association with singers behind the scenes, Cleva is able to create just the right musical fabric with the orchestra (who play such an integral part in this opera) to give the singers the support they need.



verdi otello

otello mario del monaco
desdemona victoria de los angeles
iago leonard warren
emilia rosalind elias
cassio paul franke
lodovico nicola moscona
montano clifford harvuot
Roderigo charles anthony
herald calvin marsh

orchestra & chorus of
the metropolitan opera

fausto cleva conductor

live broadcast recording, 1958

otello verdi

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PACO 154

cd one

- 1 RADIO Introduction (1:39)
- 2 **Act 1** - Una vela! (4:00)
- 3 Esultate! (4:33)
- 4 Fuoco di gioia! (2:35)
- 5 Roderigo, beviam! (1:14)
- 6 Innaffia l'ugola! (3:54)
- 7 Capitano, v'attende (1:21)
- 8 Olà! che avvien? (2:58)
- 9 Gia nella notte (2:20)
- 10 Quando narravi (3:01)
- 11 Venga la morte! (4:02)
- 12 **Act 2** - Non ti crucciari (3:09)
- 13 Credo in un Dio crudele (4:22)
- 14 Eccola (1:13)
- 15 Ciò m'accora (4:13)
- 16 Dove guardi splendono (4:13)
- 17 D'un uom che geme (4:47)
- 18 Desdemona real! (1:41)
- 19 Ora e per sempre addio (3:22)
- 20 Era la notte (4:43)
- 21 Sì, pel ciel (2:36)

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Mario Del Monaco as Otello

Live broadcast performance from the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, 8 March, 1958

Total duration: 2 hr 13:32

cd two

- 1 **Act 3** - Introduction (1:09)
- 2 La vedetta del porto (1:11)
- 3 Dio ti giocondi, o sposo (9:12)
- 4 Dio! mi potevi scagliar (3:55)
- 5 Vieni, l'aula è deserta (3:22)
- 6 Questa è una ragna (1:50)
- 7 Come la ucciderò? (1:04)
- 8 Viva il Leon di San Marco! (4:52)
- 9 A terra!... sì... nel livido fango (7:50)
- 10 **Act 4** - Era più calmo? (3:39)
- 11 Mia madre aveva una povera ancella (7:29)
- 12 Ave Maria (4:39)
- 13 Chi è là? (5:26)
- 14 Calma come la tomba (3:09)
- 15 Niun mi tema (5:09)
- 16 RADIO Outro (3:41)

Orchestra and Chorus of The Metropolitan Opera
Fausto Cleva, conductor

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