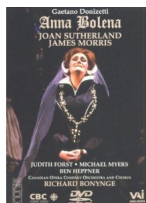


Gaetano Donizetti - Anna Bolena (Sutherland) [1985]

Written by bluesever

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Anna Bolena - Joan Sutherland Enrico - James Morris Giovanna - Judith Forst Percy - Michael Myers Rochefort - Gidon Saks Smeton - Janet Stubbs Hervey - Ben Heppner
Canadian Opera Company Chorus and Orchestra Richard Bonyngue – conductor Toronto, Canada 1985

On May 22, 1984 Joan Sutherland gave her very first performance as Donizetti's Anna Bolena in Toronto. Two performances later, on May 28, the performance was televised with the premiere cast and quite a premiere cast it was: James Morris as Henry VIII, Judith Forst as Jane Seymour, Michael Myers as Percy and in the small role of Hervey, the as yet unknown Ben Heppner. Pirate videos have been floating around for years of this performance but what a treat it is to see this mint copy looking as if it were being telecast today! Sumptuous costumes and appropriately stern sets along with excellent camera work help the singers to bring their characters vividly to life. Even though Sutherland was definitely in her later years, there is plenty of voice left to cope with the many vocal as well as dramatic challenges of this role. It is also a great opportunity to see James Morris as Henry -- a role he rarely performed and never recorded. The role offers no vocal difficulties that Morris cannot master and he is visually the antithesis of the overweight lecher we expect Henry VIII to be. Richard Bonyngue conducts with sensitivity and style, bringing a "rightness" to this performance which many modern day bel canto performances rarely deliver. As with VAI's Norma -- subtitles are permanent and not optional but this is a small drawback which can be easily overlooked and indeed a plus for those who are hearing this opera for the first time. This DVD comes highly recommended not only as an aural but a visual treat as well. Many thanks to VAI for releasing its recent DVD's (Great Opera Stars on the Bell Telephone Hour and NORMA) -- keep them coming! --- Scott Holmes, amazon.com

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