Amilcare Ponchielli – La Gioconda (Callas) [1959]

CD1

01. Preludio (Preludio) [0:05:01.03]
02. Act 1 - Feste e pane! [0:02:53.50]
03. Act 1 - E cantan su lor tombe! [0:02:03.17]
04. Act 1 - Figlia, che reggi il tremulo piè [0:03:24.05]
05. Act 1 - L'ora non giunse ancor del vespro santo [0:02:53.03]
06. Act 1 - Polso di cerro! [0:03:17.52]
07. Act 1 - Suo covo è un tugurio [0:03:19.58]
08. Act 1 - Che ¿ La plebe or qui si arroga [0:04:12.42]
09. Act 1 - Voce di donna o d'angelo [0:05:05.55]
10. Act 1 - Enzo Grimaldo, Principe di Santafior, che pensi ¿ [0:03:06.40]
11. Act 1 - O grido di quest'anima [0:02:45.68]
12. Act 1 - Maledici ¿ Sta ben...l'amor t'accieca [0:02:07.35]
13. Act 1 - O monumento! [0:03:49.30]
14. Act 1 - Carneval! Baccanal! [0:02:23.47]
15. Act 1 - Angele Dei [0:05:59.53]

CD2

01. Act 2 - Ho! He! Ho! He! Fissa il timone! [0:04:07.08]
02. Act 2 - Pescator, affonda l'esca [0:01:34.40]
03. Act 2 - Pescator, affonda l'esca [0:02:34.20]
04. Act 2 - Sia gloria ai canti dei naviganti! [0:04:21.35]
05. Act 2 - Cielo e mar! [0:04:27.22]
06. Act 2 - Ma chi vien ¿ [0:04:31.18]
07. Act 2 - Laggiù nelle nebbie remote [0:02:43.45]
08. Act 2 - E il tuo nocchiere or la fuga t'appresta [0:00:41.62]
09. Act 2 - Stella del marinar! [0:02:10.65]
10. Act 2 - E un anatema! [0:00:36.25]
11. Act 2 - Là attesi e il tempo colsi [0:01:13.15]
12. Act 2 - L'amo come il fulgor del creato! [0:02:02.45]
13. Act 2 - Il mio braccio t'affera! [0:01:38.20]
14. Act 2 - Maledizion! Ha preso il vol! [0:01:42.30]
15. Act 2 - Vedi là, nel canal morto [0:03:07.30]

CD3
01. Act 3 - Scene 1 - Si! morir ella de'! [0:02:37.23]
02. Act 3 - Scene 1 - Ombre di mia prosapia [0:02:27.10]
03. Act 3 - Scene 1 - Qui chiamata m'avete ¿...Bella così, madonna [0:03:12.20]
04. Act 3 - Scene 1 - Morir! è troppo orribile! [0:02:50.55]
05. Act 3 - Scene 1 - La gaia canzone [0:03:21.52]
06. Act 3 - Scene 1 - O madre mia, nell'isola fatale [0:02:06.35]
07. Act 3 - Scene 2 - Benvenuti messeri! Andrea Sagredo! [0:04:00.18]
08. Act 3 - Scene 2 - Grazie vi rendo per le vostre laudi [0:01:31.25]
09. Act 3 - Scene 2 - Prodigio! Incanto! [0:09:38.57]
10. Act 3 - Scene 2 - Vieni!...Lasciami! [0:03:19.60]
11. Act 3 - Scene 2 - Già ti veggo immota e smorta [0:05:21.13]
12. Act 4 - Nessun v'ha visto ¿ [0:05:42.37]
13. Act 4 - Suicidio! [0:04:12.40]
14. Act 4 - Ecco, il velen di Laura [0:05:17.65]
15. Act 4 - Ridarti il sol, la vita! [0:02:50.48]
16. Act 4 - O furibonda jena [0:02:38.20]
17. Act 4 - Ten va serenata [0:01:07.32]
18. Act 4 - La barca s'avvicina [0:02:01.38]
19. Act 4 - Quest'ultimo bacio che il pianto [0:05:00.37]
20. Act 4 - Ora posso morir. tutto è compiuto [0:03:53.08]
21. Act 4 - Vo' farmi più gaia, più fulgida ancora [0:03:03.50]
La Gioconda - Maria Callas Enzo - Pier Miranda Ferraro Barnaba - Piero Cappuccilli Laura - Fiorenza Cossotto Alvise - Ivo Vinco La Cieca - Irene Companeez Zuàne - Leonardo Monreale Un Cantore - Carlo Forti Isèpo - Renato Ercolani Un Pilota - Carlo Forti La Scala Theater Orchestra & Chorus
Antonino Votto – conductor

The mercilessly self-critical Maria Callas considered her singing in the last act here among the most satisfying of her records, saying that "it's all there for anyone who cares to understand or wishes to know what I was about." "Suicidio" emerges less a histrionic soliloquy than an interior, multi- dimensional monologue. Moreover, the soprano is in better voice than her 1952 Cetra Gioconda, which, however, boasts a more vibrant supporting cast, greater energy from the podium (especially in the first act), and avoids a small but not insignificant cut Antonino Votto makes here in the final act. EMI furnishes full texts and translations, an excellent essay that places this recording in context, and excellent remastered sonics. --Jed Distler

This recording was done in September, 1959, when Callas was right in the middle of the marital quadrangle with Aristotle Onasis. She had just ended her marriage and was all over the front pages of the newspapers. It is amazing, that in the midst of all of this media frenzy, Callas was able to go into La Scala and record such a performance as that heard here. Callas is in thrilling vocal condition here, and she creates a vivid and compelling characterization of the tormented street singer. There are actually a few instances when her top notes are more secure than they were on her earlier 1952 recording (!) Unfortunately, Callas had to carry much of this performance by herself. Fiorenza Cossotto, certainly a great mezzo, is heard at the very beginning of her career, and the power and authority she later acquired is not very evident here, though she certainly sings well. Also, an equally youthful Piero Cappuccilli provides a somewhat non-menacing Barnaba, though the potential of his voice is certainly obvious (like Cossotto, he also went on to a great career in Europe). Ivo Vinco is a sonorous Alvise. The real weakness in this cast, however, is the tenor Pier Miranda Ferraro, who never really "made it". His singing is merely adequate, but in the company of Callas and even the very young Cossotto and Cappuccilli, it comes off as less than even that.

The stereo sound here is very good, and the sound balances are excellent. I cannot give this recording an unqualified rave (due to the weakness of the tenor, and to a lesser extent, the work of Cossotto and Cappuccilli, both for whom the best work was still in the future), but Callas' performance is so outstanding, and her singing so persuasive that it washes away all else.---L.Mitnick, amazon.com

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