

Pacini - Saffo (Capuana) [1967]

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Sobota, 08 Listopad 2014 16:58 -

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CD1 1. Pacini: Saffo: Prelude & Choral Introduction - Divini carmi! - Chorus 4:33 2. Pacini: Saffo: Che avvenne - Ippia, Alcandro 3:22 3. Pacini: Saffo: Di sua voce - Alcandro, Ippia 4:34 4. Pacini: Saffo: Faon viene - Ippia, Alcandro, Faone 3:50 5. Pacini: Saffo: Perche Faon dal circo - Saffo, Faone, Chorus, Lisimaco 9:52 6. Pacini: Saffo: Qual io t'aborro - Faone, Saffo, Chorus 2:37 7. Pacini: Saffo: Al crin le cingete - Dirce, Chorus, Climene 3:35 8. Pacini: Saffo: Ah! Con lui mi fu rapita - Climene, Dirce, Chorus 5:25 9. Pacini: Saffo: Uno stranier! - Dirce, Climene, Lisimaco, Saffo 9:20 10. Pacini: Saffo: Corri all'altar - Chorus, Climene, Saffo 5:29 11. Pacini: Saffo: Le cetre, le tibie - Chorus, Alcandro, Faone, Climene, Saffo, Lisimaco 7:17 12. Pacini: Saffo: Ai mortali - Saffo, Alcandro, Faone, Climene, Lisimaco, Ippia, Dirce, Chorus 6:19 13. Pacini: Saffo: Saffo! Qui siamo in Leucade! - Alcandro, Saffo, Climene, Ippia, Dirce, Chorus, Faone, Lisimaco 5:39 CD2 1. Pacini: Saffo: Voci del ciel - Alcandro, Chorus, Ippia, Saffo, Lisimaco 4:48 2. Pacini: Saffo: Signor di Leucade - Chorus, Saffo, Alcandro, Ippia, Climene, Lisimaco 10:30 3. Pacini: Saffo: Oh, padre mio!... Figlia! - Saffo, Alcandro, Climene 4:28 4. Pacini: Saffo: Alcandro, il rito - Ippia, Chorus, Alcandro, Climene, Lisimaco, Saffo 7:25 5. Pacini: Saffo: Fra queste orrende tenebre... Qual frutto acerbo - Faone 7:49 6. Pacini: Saffo: Ite ad Alcandro - Ippia, Faone, Chorus 3:47 7. Pacini: Saffo: S'ella paventa - Chorus 6:20 8. Pacini: Saffo: Premio d'amor - Saffo, Chorus, Alcandro, Climene, Dirce, Lisimaco 8:09 9. Pacini: Saffo: Mi lasciate - Faone, Ippia, Alcandro, Climene, Dirce, Lisimaco, Chorus, Saffo 5:33 Saffo: Leyla Gencer Climene: Franca Mattiucci Faone: Tito Del Bianco Ippia: Mario Guggia Alcandro: Louis Quilico Dirce: Vittoria Maniachi Lisimaco: Maurizio Piacente Orchestra e Coro del Teatro San Carlo, Napoli Franco Capuana - conductor

Giovanni Pacini's opera Saffo is the only work of this contemporary of Rossini to make it into the operatic repertoire, and even this slim popularity only extends to Italy and a few of the Spanish-speaking countries. Nonetheless, Opera d'Oro's Pacini: Saffo is the third recording of the opera that has appeared, all three of them live, and so far this Naples Teatro San Carlo Opera performance from April 7, 1967, appears to be the earliest complete recording of Saffo. The title role is essayed by the "queen of the pirates," mezzo-soprano Leyla Gencer with bass-baritone Louis Quilico as a robust Aleandro and little-known tenor Tito del Bianco just okay

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in the role of Faone. Quilico is very dynamic here, particularly in the opening scenes where he has most of the music and appears to be driving the whole production with the forcefulness of his performance. However, it is Gencer who, despite a rough start, eventually winds up owning this performance -- she obviously loves the role, and delivers up Saffo in strongly dramatic overtones that suggest a carefully considered combination of singing and acting, with an increasing reliance for the latter as the show progresses. This is one of the best of Gencer's many live opera performances.

Like most Opera d'Oro packages, this Pacini: Saffo has been around the block before, appearing on the Hunt Productions label in 1990 and on the Canadian Arkadia label a little later. This sounds like it was recorded with reasonably good fidelity originally, but with noticeable tape hiss, and then someone CEDARed it to death for reissue; it is somewhat boxy and constricted, yet still betrays a hint of high end. On a sound quality scale of 1 to 5, 5 being equivalent to a commercial studio recording and 1 being a Mapleson cylinder, Pacini: Saffo is about a 3.5, not bad for an Italian radio performance of the 1960s. The orchestra is a little scrappy and the chorus is none too distinguished, entering a little late for their cue on more than one occasion.

Saffo is a very good opera -- it has splendid ensemble passages, and ordinary recitative is set with the object of being as interesting as the set pieces, of which there are only a few. Stylistically Saffo is reminiscent of Bellini to some extent, but mostly of early Verdi of whom, it is said, this opera influenced considerably. Ultimately one would hope for a studio recording of Saffo, and so few new opera recordings are being made in the post-9/11 world it is not advisable to hold one's breath for that. But in the meantime, the Opera d'Oro disc will do... it is representative of both the star performers and the work itself, and it is priced right for those who are looking to experiment, rather than to invest. --- Uncle Dave Lewis, Rovi

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