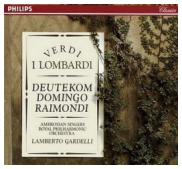
Giuseppe Verdi – I Lombardi (1971)



CD1 *1. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Preludio e Introduzione: "Oh nobile esempio" The Ambrosian Singers 6:35 2. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Scena: "Qui nel logo santo e pio" Desdemona Malvisi 0:57 3. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Quintetto: "T'assale un tremito!" Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 3:37 4. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Scena: "Or s'ascolti" Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 3:33 5. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Coro: "A te nell'ora infausta" Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 2:49 6. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Recitativo: "Vergin!... il ciel per ora" The Ambrosian Singers 1:27 7. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Aria: "Sciagurata! hai tu creduto" Lamberto Gardelli 6:49 8. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Scena: "Tutta tremante ancor" Lamberto Gardelli 2:23 9. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Preghiera: "Salve Maria" Lamberto Gardelli 3:41 10. I Lombardi / Act 1 - Scena e Finale: "Vieni! Già pose Arvino" The Ambrosian Singers 2:03 play 11. I Lombardi / Act 1 - "Mostro d'averno orribile" Christina Deutekom 3:29 12. I Lombardi / Act 1 - "Parricida" Desdemona Malvisi 2:54 13. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Coro: "E dunque vero" Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 2:43 14. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Scena: "O madre mia, che fa colei?" The Ambrosian Singers 1:10 15. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Cavatina: "La mia letizia infondere" - "Come poteva un angelo" Montserrat Aparici 6:42 16. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Scena e Marcia:"E ancor silenzio" Lamberto Gardelli 8:03 17. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Duettino: "Sei tu l'uom della caverna" Lamberto Gardelli 1:57 18. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Inno dei Crociati: "Stolto Allhà!" The Ambrosian Singers 2:08*
CD2
1. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Coro di Schiave: "La bella straniera" Lamberto Gardelli 3:07 2. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Rondò: "Oh madre, dal cielo soccorri" - Arioso: "Se vano è il pregare" The Ambrosian Singers 4:28 3. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Finale: "Chi ne salva" The Ambrosian Singers 1:17 4. I Lombardi / Act 2 - Cabaletta: "No! No! giusta causa non è" Jerome Lo Monaco 4:13 5. I Lombardi / Act 3 - Processione: "Gerusalem" The Ambrosian Singers 5:36 6. I Lombardi / Act 3 - Scena: "Dove sola m'inoltro?" The Ambrosian Singers 5:23 7. I Lombardi / Act 3 - Duetto: "Oh belle, a questa misera" Lamberto Gardelli 5:41 8. I Lombardi / Act 3 - Scena ed Aria: "Che vid'io mai?" Lamberto Gardelli 3:29 9. I Lombardi / Act 3 - Preludio The Ambrosian Singers 4:04 10. I Lombardi / Act 3 - Scena: "Qui posa il fianco" Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 4:26 11. I Lombardi / Act 3 - Finale. Terzetto: "Qual voluttà" Ruggero Raimondi 4:40 play 12. I Lombardi / Act 4 - Coro e Scena: "Componi, o cara vergine" - "In cielo benedetto" Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 6:32 13. I Lombardi / Act 4 - Aria: "Qual prodigio" Lamberto Gardelli 3:14 14. I Lombardi / Act 4 - Coro: "O signore, dal tetto natio" Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 3:58 15. I Lombardi / Act 4 - Inno di guerra: "Al Siloe" - "Guerra! Guerra!" Christina Deutekom 5:00 16. I Lombardi / Act 4 - Scena: "Questa è mia tenda" Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 2:41 17. I Lombardi / Act 4 - "Un breve istante" - Inno finale: "Te lediamo, gran Dio"

Lamberto Gardelli 4:40 Arvino - Jerome Lo Monaco Pagano - Ruggero Raimondi Viclinda - Desdemona Malvisi Giselda - Cristina Deutekom Pirro - Stafford Dean Prior de la ciudad de Milán - Keith Erwen Acciano - Clifford Grant Oronte - Plácido Domingo Sofi - Montserrat Aparici Royal Philarmonic Orchestra Ambrosian Singers Lamberto Gardelli, 1971

"The young Domingo, singing with a rich, throaty lustre, makes a good job of what he has to do (and no exhibitionism or excitement—through additional high notes in "La mia letizia"). The second tenor, Jerome Lo Monaco, presents a suitable contrast, with his lighter, reedier tone. The soprano part is difficult to cast, for it wants dramatic weight as well as the agility of a virtuoso and an extensive upper range: Cristina Deutekom copes well with the tessitura but her somewhat tremulous tone gives limited pleasure. Raimondi, on the other hand, is heard in one of his finest performances on record, the opulent resonance being spread evenly throughout the whole voice and his characterization showing imaginative involvement. The chorus work is strong, and Gardelli leads the orchestra in a well played, finely recorded account of the score.'" --- GRAMOPHONE (11/1989)

A little over a year separates this, Verdi's fourth opera (1843) and "Ernani", his fifth (1844). Both have always been successful but to me there seems to me to have been more development in Verdi's style and skill than so short an interval would normally permit. There is an assurance and unity about "Ernani" that eludes him in "I Lombardi" which, for all its brilliance and energy, remains a patchy work. Of course, it contains some great arias and the customary stirring trio at the end of Act 3, but its more than usually absurd plot and restless jumping from one short scene to another create a fractured impression. It is of course one of the series of patriotic operas penned by Solera, gratefully seized upon by the Italian public, and attempts an uneasy blend of chauvinism and piety - not to mention Giselda's miraculous supernatural vision at the beginning of Act 4; no wonder Verdi dropped this slightly embarrassing scene when he re-worked the opera as "Jérusalem" for Paris in 1847.

As ever, Solera is more concerned to generate situations affording dramatic confrontation and impact than to achieve subtlety or verisimilitude and Verdi revels in the sequence of opportunities thereby afforded. Some of the music really is of the worst rum-ti-tum-oompah-oompah variety yet there are also lovely numbers, such as Oronte's famous "La mia letizia infondere". That aria is sung very nicely here by a young, sappy and limber Domingo (in his puppy-fat stage according to the photos!) but he does not erase memories of

Carreras's account of that aria in his first recital record in 1977 conducted by Roberto Benzi or of Pavarotti in his prime; both achieve more passion and plangency of tone. Nor are Domingo's co-stars to everyone's taste: Deutekom's thin tone and rapid vibrato can give her voice a somewhat gargling effect but she floats some lovely pianissimi and is certainly more vibrant and involved than Domingo, whose characterisation is a little all-purpose-melancholy generic, despite its sheer beauty as singing per se. Raimondi is at his best here, his sonorous, rather lugubrious sound not inappropriate to the dour, sombre Pagano. It is an oddity that the there is no true baritone or mezzo role in this opera - though there there are three basses (Pagano being more of a bass-baritone, I suppose), three tenors and three sopranos.

This recording was of course the first in the eight operas which eventually constituted the (unfinished) Early Verdi project conducted by Lamberto Gardelli. It is now almost 40 years old, yet it has not yet been bettered and is unlikely to be so. ---Ralph Moore

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