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Lucia Di Lammermoor: Vocal Score (Italian Language Edition), Vocal Score (Kalmus Edition) (Italian Edition)



Synopsis

An Opera, composed by Gaetano Donizetti.

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I have come upon the Mercury opera recordings fairly recently, although I have been collecting other Mercury records and CDs off and on for 35 years or more. I have managed to get the records of all of the Mercury operas except Lucia Di Lammermoor and Rigoletto, which for some reason don't seem to turn up nearly as often as the others and have very high prices, well beyond my interest in paying. The sound of all of these late 1950s-early 1960s opera recordings is classic Mercury Living Presence stereo sound and actually quite alive and wonderful. On first listening to one I thought, if only all operas were recorded so well! These are records where you could enjoy listening to the sound of the opera performed in the theatre even if you didn't like the opera. They really show off just how good Bob Fine and Wilma Cozart were as engineer and recording director. Since I was interested in listening to Lucia and had not been able to buy the Mercury recording on records, I bought this Urania 2 CD set of the Mercury recording knowing very little about it other than it was the Mercury recording and it claims to be a "Restored Edition". This set comes without a libretto, so I also picked up a cheap copy of Decca's second recording with Sutherland, which does have a libretto, just so I could get a libretto to follow along. As noted, I don't have the Mercury Records set of this opera to compare the CD to, but I do have several other Mercury operas and I do have the single disc Mercury record of excerpts from the opera. After having listened to the complete opera on this CD set, I listened to the excerpts on the record. The CD does sound a lot like the Mercury record, except... and there are some important exceptions.

Track 4 of CD 1 is very close to track 1 of the record but some of the other tracks obviously have the high frequencies removed. Listening to the CD first, it does sound pretty good and a lot like A Mercury record. But comparing the same music sequentially, the highs on the CD are often but not consistently missing. The fundamentals are there but some of the overtones appear to have been filtered out, perhaps to remove noise or distortion. The CD doesn't have all the depth and detail of a Mercury record--does any CD?--but the missing highs also mean important depth and detail cues are reduced or missing and add to the information loss. It sure would be nice if Philips could get rights to this and properly remaster it for CD and SACD from the original 3-track stereo master tapes, but that doesn't seem to be happening. But if you really want to hear this recording of this opera, this particular CD set gives you a pretty good idea of what the record is like, but it does have its flaws. In fact, I strongly suspect that what I was listening to in this CD reissue IS a CD of the record. For the most part, in isolation, it sounds very good, but there are, if I remember correctly, two places where you can hear a noise that sounds suspiciously like the bump of a bubble in the vinyl of a record with that defect and there are a couple places where a scratch comes through and there are a couple places where there is distortion on loud high notes that suggests a record not a master tape. Overall, the effect is quite like listening to a near mint record played on a system not quite as good as my own. My suspicion is that a near mint record (this is a 53 year old recording after all) WAS played on a playback system better than mine and transferred to digital, probably at better than red book CD resolution, processed to remove mostly minor record noises and often some of the high frequencies, and downrezed to red book CD. And CD resolution and the removed high frequencies are why it doesn't sound as good as the record even though I am playing the CD on an Oppo BDP 105 through the dedicated stereo outputs. [In fact, I have made CDs from fine old vinyl in my own collection that I have copied mostly so I could listen to them in the car and aside from the missing highs on this set, they have a rather similar sound.] I mentioned the Decca recording with Sutherland. I haven't listened to more than a couple tracks of it so far (but I do plan to), but it includes a fair amount of music and several scenes or parts thereof that are not included in the Mercury recording and apparently were not generally performed before the first Sutherland recording. The Mercury recording gives a much greater sense of being performed in an opera house of modest proportions and has a better and more natural balance between singers and orchestra. It also is much more detailed and intimate and a more upfront in the hall recording than the Decca. If any one knows of an excellent authorized CD or SACD actually made from the Mercury master tapes, I would appreciate it if you would leave a comment about it. Meanwhile, I will recommend, with reservations, this CD to those Mercury collectors who don't own the original

records and don't want to pay the going price for a used set on the collector's market, but would still like a chance to enjoy the recording.

well done

MADE IT EASY TO FOLLOW THE STORY LINE ALONG WITH THE MUSICAL SCORE. PRINT SIZE GOOD. WRING STYLE EASY TO FOLLOW AND TO UNDERSTAND.'

Beautiful hard-cover Ricordi. Great edition, great quality.

This is the vocal score only!! Please be advised that this edition has no English translations!! Great edition!! Other editions have music cut with no mention.

Just a must.

There is a paucity of guides to Lucia di Lammermoor. Hence, I give this three stars although I wish there was some critical commentary and description of productions thereof. This guide does have the complete libretto with snippets of music from the key arias as well as the complete story behind the opera.

What a delight to have this 1959 Ricordi studio recording, issued on Mercury available again. At the time Sanzogno's conducting was criticized for its lack of Donizettian grace. I believe the comparison was Serafin's irreplaceable first recording with Callas. The same reviewer, however, went on to say that it more than made up for that "lack" with its dramatic energy and thrust. The young Renata Scotto is a treasure. This is not my favorite Di Stefano performance. At certain points in his final scena he seems to bellow and ham it up rather than sing. This performance is not my first choice for a Lucia. That would be Callas's first or Moffo's (along with her Angel rendering of the mad scene in her first bel canto album). Fortunately I don't have to choose. Anyone who loves this opera could do worse than give this version a try. There is an extra bonus on this issue not mentioned in the listing or on the cover. The second disc is filled out with 9 tracks of a very young Di Stefano (1944) singing to piano accompaniment and all the purity of tone and grace which made him one of the leading tenors of his generation.

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