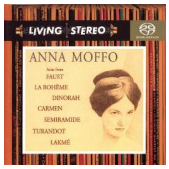
Anna Moffo - Arias (Serafin) [1960]



01 - Faust-Air Des Bijoux 02 - La Boheme-Mi Chiamano Mimi 03 - Dinorah-Ombre Legere 04 - Carmen-Je Dis Que Rien Ne M'Epouvante 05 - Semiramide-Bel Raggio Lusinghier 06 - Turadot-Signore, Ascolta 07 - Turadot-Tu Che Di Gel Sei Cinta 08 - Lakme-Air Des Clochettes
Rome Opera Orchestra Tullio Serafin – conductor

Anna Moffo's recording career had an auspicious start in 1955 when she was engaged by Karajan to sing Nanetta in his by now legendary Falstaff. Here in her first solo album she had added a little more body to her lovely voice and had had some more stage experience. She had made her Metropolitan debut less than a year earlier and was rapidly becoming a star. Hers was also one of the most beautiful soprano voices around during the late 1950s and most of the 1960s. By the beginning of the 1970s it had started to deteriorate, even though she continued to appear on stage. She left a fairly large recorded legacy, including an excellent Luisa Miller with Bergonzi and MacNeil, a Rigoletto under Solti with Alfredo Kraus and Robert Merrill (to be reviewed shortly) and a splendid Verdi recital, all of them from the mid-1960s. I do hope that the recital will be reissued soon, since it is to my mind one of the best collections of Verdi arias ever recorded.

The present disc was an original three-track stereo recording and played through SACD equipment delivers stunning realism without unnecessary highlighting. Just listen to the triangle, so distinctly caught on the first track, and the full orchestra sounds magnificent, e.g. in the Semiramide aria. Tullio Serafin, past eighty at the time, knew all the tricks and he kept things moving. One could object that some of the French excerpts sound more Italian than French, but why complain when everything is done with the utmost conviction? Just sit back and enjoy the sound of Moffo's creamy voice. Listen to her exquisite pianissimo singing in the Bohème aria; the wonderful scaling down at the end. Admire her elegant coloratura singing in the Meyerbeer aria and discover what a lovely Micaela she is in the Carmen excerpt. In the 1970s she went on to sing the title role in that opera, she even recorded it with Corelli for Eurodisc, but hers was not really a Carmen voice. Best of all are possibly Liù's two arias from Turandot, a role she sang

at the Met opposite Corelli and Birgit Nilsson.

Indeed everything is tasteful and technically secure. She never indulges in unnecessary distortions of the musical line to express deeper feelings. As a matter of fact that is what some commentators have found most obviously missing in her interpretations: identification with the different characters. On stage her beautiful appearance and good acting could compensate for that, on recordings of complete operas she sometimes overdid the voice acting. Her La traviata, recorded about the same time as this recital, is so filled with sobs and sighs that one has to seek shelter. None of this here, though, and as with some other much loved singers, the beauty of the voice is enough reason to get this disc. Playing time is short, but LPs were normally this length 45 years ago. There are no texts, but the original notes by Francis Robinson, assistant manager of the Metropolitan Opera, are retained with some added information on Ms Moffo's career. Also there are some technical notes and the booklet reproduces the original LP cover.

So: glorious singing of beautiful arias in stunning sound that could have been recorded yesterday. Richard Mohr and Lewis Layton knew what they were doing and I suppose the remastering team also deserve a rosette for the finished result. Recommended? Yes! ---Göran Forsling, musicweb-international.com

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