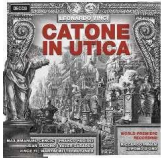


Leonardo Vinci - Catone in Utica (2015)

Written by bluesever

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Disc 1 1. *Sinfonia 1 (Catone in Utica)* 2. *Sinfonia II (Catone in Utica)* 3. *Sinfonia Iii (Catone In Utica)* 4. *"Perché s'è mesto o padre?" (Act 1)* 5. *"Con sì bel nome in fronte" (Act 1)* 6. *"Poveri affetti miei" (Act 1)* 7. *"Non ti minaccio sdegno" (Act 1)* 8. *"Che giurai! Che promisi!" (Act 1)* 9. *"Che legge spietata!" (Act 1)* 10. *"Dunque Cesare venga" (Act 1)* 11. *"Io conquest'occhi" (Act 1)* 12. *"Si sgomenti alle sue pene" (Act 1)* 13. *"Tu taci Emilia?" (Act 1)* 14. *"Nell'ardire che il seno t'accende" (Act 1)* 15. *"Quanto da te diverso" (Act 1)* 16. *"Piangendo ancora rincecer suole" (Act 1)* 17. *"Se gli altrui folli amori" (Act 1)* 18. *"O nel sen di qualche stella" (Act 1)* 19. *"Giunse dunque a tentarti" (Act 1)* 20. *"Pur ti reveggo, o Marzia" (Act 1)* 21. *"Chi un dolce amor condanna" (Act 1)* 22. *"Mie perdute speranze" (Act 1)* 23. *"E' in ogni core diverso amore" (Act 1)*

Disc 2 1. *"Se manca Arbace" (Act 1)* 2. *"Un certo non so che" (Act 1)* 3. *"Ah troppo dissi" (Act 1)* 4. *"E' folia se nascondete" (Act 1)* 5. *"Romani, il vostro duce" (Act 2)* 6. *"Va', ritorna al tuo tiranno" (Act 2)* 7. *"A tanto eccesso arriva l'orgoglio di Catone?" (Act 2)* 8. *"So, che pietà non hai" (Act 2)* 9. *"E qual sorte è la mia!" (Act 2)* 10. *"Soffre talor del vento" (Act 2)* 11. *"Lode agli dei La fuggitiva speme" (Act 2)* 12. *"In che t'offende" (Act 2)* 13. *"Tu vedi o bella" (Act 2)* 14. *"Per te spero" (Act 2)* 15. *"Oh dei tutta se stessa" (Act 2)* 16. *"Nascesti alle pene" (Act 2)* 17. *"Si vuole ad onta mi anche Cesare s'ascolti?" (Act 2)* 18. *"Se in campo armato" (Act 2)*

Disc 3 1. *"Ah signor che facesti?" (Act 2)* 2. *"Dovea svenarti allora" (Act 2)* 3. *"Sarete paghi alfin" (Act 2)* 4. *"So che godendo vai" (Act 2)* 5. *"Udisti Arbace? Il credo appena" (Act 2)* 6. *"Se sciogliere non vuoi" (Act 2)* 7. *"L'ingiustizia, il disprezzo" (Act 2)* 8. *"Che sia la gelosia" (Act 2)* 9. *"Tutto amico ho tentato" (Act 3)* 10. *"La fronda che circonda" (Act 3)* 11. *"Quanti aspetti la sorte cangia in un giorno!" (Act 3)* 12. *"Confusa, smarrita" (Act 3)* 13. *"Qual'insoliti moti" (Act 3)* 14. *"Combattuta da tante vicende" (Act 3)* 15. *"Del rivale all'aita" (Act 3)* 16. *"Quell'amor che poco accende" (Act 3)* 17. *"Pur veggo alfine un raggio d'incerta luce" (Act 3)* 18. *"? questo amici il luogo" (Act 3)* 19. *"Deh, in vita ti serba" (Act 3)* 20. *"Dove mai l'idol mio" (Act 3)*

Max

Emanuel Cencic (Arbace) - countertenor Franco Fagioli (Cesare) - countertenor Valer Sabadus (Marzia) - countertenor Martin Mitterutzner (Fulvio) - tenor Vince Yi (Emilia) - countertenor Juan Sancho (Catone) - tenor Il Pomo D'oro Riccardo Minasi - conductor

World premiere recording of an opera by a Neapolitan master fast gaining a first-rate modern

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reputation. Max Emanuel Cencic gathers around him an intoxicating mix of stratospheric countertenors, a top tenor, and an orchestra who sizzle with excitement for a performance of an opera that will appeal to all fans of Baroque music's unsung heroes.

As March's 'Five Countertenors' album showcased, the age of the countertenor is here. Max Emanuel Cencic has gathered around him, once again, a superb cast to bring Vinci's "*Catone In Utica*" to vivid life.

"Vinci is the Lully of Italy: true, simple, natural, expressive"- for generations Leonardo Vinci was just another obscure Baroque composer: this first-rate recording will lift the veil from this forgotten genius of Italian opera, and from the mysterious all-male world of the 18th-century Roman stage. With a libretto by Metastasio, Vinci's opera was unveiled in Rome in 1728 with an all-male cast (women having been banned from the stage by the Pope): countertenors took the three heroic male roles as well as the female parts. ---prestomusic.com

Vinci's *Catone in Utica* was premièred in Rome in 1728 with an all-male cast. This followed the long-standing 1588 decree of Pope Sixtus V banning women from staged productions in the city. Thus in this opera the heroic male roles are taken exclusively by castrati, who also took over the female roles. The text is by Metastasio, who based it on Plutarch's account of Cato's suicide. This performance, luxuriating in an abundance of counter-tenors, is heard uncut.

Decca has some of the best counter-tenors on its books at the moment and three of the singers here – Sabadus, Cencic and Yi – were present on their 'The 5 Countertenors' blockbuster recently (review) which was a fine showcase for their talents. Here those talents are laser-focused on this single work to great advantage. It helps that orchestral duties are in the hands of *Il Pomo d'Oro* under their inspirational violinist and director Riccardo Minasi. He seldom misses a theatrical trick and unlike some – let's say René Jacobs – equally seldom strays into the realm of redundant musical hyperbole. You couldn't wish for a more well-paced or dramatically convincing opening three-part Sinfonia, drums to the fore and brass braying. The only time I'd fault him is in some moments when the baroque guitar accompaniment is too insistent. It can be thrilling but cumulatively can sound overdone. In Act II Scene XIII Minasi has *Catone's* aria, *Dovea svenarti* aggressively accompanied in a way that is both thrilling and dubiously musical.

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In the role of Cato is the tenor Juan Sancho, whose voice is powerfully directed though never stentorian; its potent upward extension is unforced, as he shows in his Act I Scene I aria *Con sì bel nome*. There's some metal there too in Act II's *Va', ritorna al tuo tiranno*. The super-virtuosic Franco Fagioli assumes the role of Caesar and his crystalline purity is, predictably, one of the set's greatest assets. That said, he shines as much in slow arias, where his legato is excellent, as in faster more imperious ones. For an example of the last, try Act II's pomposo aria *Soffre talor*, where there's a rich variety of orchestral colour to accompany him as he articulates in the B section, quite brilliantly, down to his chest voice.

Cencic takes the role of Arbace and one often finds him singing somewhat lower in his register than in other recordings. This brings out different colours in his voice and is testimony to his range and his tone colours – try Act II's *Che sia la gelosia*. By contrast the more plaintive role of Marzia suits Valer Sabradus very nicely. Fellow counter-tenor Vince Yi reveals an appealingly girlish tone as Emilia, and his aria *Piagendo ancora* heralds an impersonation of some style. Tenor Martin Mitterutzner is Fulvio and he has clearly mastered Leo's demands for punchy characterisation in divisions.

Apart from the recitatives, in which several characters come together, the arias are overwhelmingly stand-alone, so it comes as a pleasure to hear four singers in the final scene. Fortunately, those many and sometimes involved recitatives are fluid and fast, though not breathless, an important quality given that they are sometimes lengthy.

The splendid booklet has a first class introduction and a full four-language libretto. At 290 pages it's certainly chunky. This world premiere recording breathes triumphant life into Leo's already theatrically convincing opera. ---Jonathan Woolf, musicweb-international.com

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