

Francesco Cilea – Adriana Lecouvreur (Buckley) [1978]

Written by bluesever

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Disc: 1 1. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 1. Michonnet, dalla bianca!* 2. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 1. Madamigella, come vi chiamerem stasera?* 3. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 1. 'Del sultano Amurate... Io son l'umile ancella'* 4. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 1. E che cercate voi?* 5. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 1. Adriana! - Che c'è* 6. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 1. La dolcissima effigie* 7. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 1. Or dunque, Abate?* 8. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 1. Ecco il monologo* 9. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 2. Principessa.* 10. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 2. Con la Regina a lungo favellai* 11. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 2. L'anim ho stanca* 12. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 2. Vi cogliam, Conte, sul fatto* 13. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 2. Ma dunque, vero?* 14. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 2. E bene?* 15. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 2. Sia! Non risponde*
Disc: 2

1. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 3. Eh, via!* 2. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 3. Voi, Principessa?* 3. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 3. Sempre la prima grazie!* 4. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 3. Il Conte di Sassonia!* 5. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 3. Il russo Mencikoff riceve l'ordine* 6. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 3. Dormi, dormi, o pastorello!* 7. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 3. Quella dama al certo!* 8. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 3. 'Giusto Cielo! che feci in tal giorno?'* 9. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 4. Preludio* 10. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 4. Amico mio!* 11. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 4. Lieta sorpresa!* 12. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 4. Una volta c'era un principe* 13. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 4. Vediam, Cielo!* 14. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 4. I fiori offerti in un'ora d'oblio* 15. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 4. Poveri fiori* 16. *Adriana Lecouvreur, opera: Act 4. Ove, dunque, son io?*

Adriana - Teresa Zylis-Gara Maurizio – Placido Domingo Principessa - Josephine Veasey
Michonnet – Anselmo Colzani Abate – John Cheek Greater Miami Opera Orchestra & Chorus
Emerson Buckley - conductor Miami 11.03.1978 live

The life of Francesco Cilea (1866-1950) spanned several important periods in Italian opera. Born before the advent of verismo, he lived well past the end of the great outpouring of lyric theatre heard from Puccini, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano, and others of their time. Although several of his works enjoyed success during his lifetime, Cilea is known best for two operas,

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L'Arlesiana, premiered in 1896, and Adriana Lecouvreur, first staged at Milan's Teatro Lirico on November 6, 1902. It was the latter work that spread the composer's fame beyond his native country and provided, in addition, a role irresistible to lyric/dramatic sopranos -- irresistible for both its soaring melodic invention and the opportunities it affords for dramatic acting (and overacting). Staged earnestly and sumptuously, it constitutes an engaging evening of music theatre.

Among its prime attractions are two arias for Adriana, well known by many who have never heard the entire work. From the first act comes "Io son l'umile ancella," in which the heroine, an actress, maintains that she is merely a handmaid of the arts. As her death nears in the final act, she bids adieu, in the aria "Poveri fiori," to a love she believes is as faded as the withered (and poisoned) violets that she inhales. These are not the only exceptional solo moments in the score, however. The role of the Princess of Bouillon calls for a stellar dramatic mezzo-soprano and rewards her with an opening scene in Act Two that can sweep an audience away ("Acerba voluttà"). The aria's concluding section ("O vagabonda stella d'Oriente") expands to an electrifying climax, musically and theatrically thrilling -- an assured showstopper for any singer of quality. The tenor, Maurizio, has his moments as well, although they are less flavorful than those for the leading women. No less important than the big occasions are those scenes which bind the story together. Cilea demonstrates a facility for handling conversation skillfully enough to further the action and never impede it. The music uses conventional harmony but employs very colorful orchestration in the service of an aesthetic that is often melodramatic but continuously effective.

The real Adriana (Adrienne Lecouvreur) was an actress of great celebrity who lived from 1692 to 1730 and revolutionized French theatre by her naturalistic approach to appearance and speech. Eschewing the declaiming of her lines, she impressed her audiences with the power of her presentation. In Cilea's opera, the actress is in love with Maurizio, Count of Saxony, whom she knows only as a soldier. Her rival for his love, the Princess de Bouillon, is angered by Maurizio's rejection of her advances and plans revenge upon the actress. When she is insulted by Adriana during the latter's public reading of certain scornful lines from Racine's Phèdre, she redoubles her resolve to do away with the actress. She poisons a clutch of violets and sends them to Adriana, certain that she will believe that they are being returned by Maurizio. He arrives to ask Adriana's hand in marriage shortly before she succumbs and dies. ---Erik Eriksson, Rovi

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