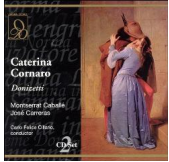


## Gaetano Donizetti – Caterina Cornaro (1986)



Disc: 1 1. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Preludio* 2. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Coro. Salve, o beati, al giubilo di puro amor promessi* 3. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Duetto. Tu l'amor mio, tu l'iride* 4. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Scena. Il sacro rito a compiere volgiamo* 5. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Concertato. Sprezza, o padre, e fede e onore* 6. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Coro. Or che l'astro in mar si cela* 7. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Recitativo. Torna all'ospite tetto, o gondoliere* 8. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Aria. Vieni, o tu, che ognora io chiamo* 9. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Cabaletta. Ah! Vieni t'affretta mio dolce tesoro* 10. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Scena. Ohimé! Qui ancor, padre mio?* 11. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Prologue. Duetto. Spera in me* 12. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Introduzione e recitativo. Sei bella, o Cipro!* 13. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Aria. Credi che dorma, o incauto* 14. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Recitativo. Lasciami, o cavalier* 15. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Aria. Da che sposa Caterina* 16. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Scena. Core, e pugnale* 17. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Scena. Grazie, o generoso* 18. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Duetto. Vedi: io piango* 19. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Seguito. Che qui non batte un core ingrato*  
Disc: 2

1. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Coro. Gemmata il serto, giovine regina* 2. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Scena. Guarda, s'avanza il Re* 3. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Cavatina. Non turbarti a questi accenti* 4. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Scena. (Oh, Caterina)* 5. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Duetto. Da quel dì che lacerato* 6. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Seguito. T'amo ancor e t'amo tanto* 7. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Scena. Partì!... Un mistero tremendo odi pria* 8. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Finale. Indietro! Io, vil carnefice* 9. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 1. Seguito. Olà!... Gran Re, la collera vendicatrice è tarda* 10. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 2. Aria. Io trar non voglio campi ed onori* 11. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 2. Cabaletta. Morte, morte!* 12. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 2. Coro. Oh ciel! Che tumulto!* 13. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 2. Recitativo. Dolorosa incertezza!* 14. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 2. Aria. Pietà, o Signor* 15. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 2. Scena. Vittoria! Vittoria!* 16. *Caterina Cornaro, opera: Act 2. Finale. Non più affanni, mie genti*

Caterina Cornaro - Montserrat Caballé Gerardo - Giacomo (Jaime) Aragall Andrea Cornaro - Claude Meloni Lusignano - Ryan Edwards Mocenigo - Gwynne Howell Strozzi - Gérard Friedman Matilde - Odile Pietti Un Cavaliere del re - Gérard Friedman Chorale Lyrique de l'O.R.T.F. Orchestre Lyrique de l'O.R.T.F. Gian-Franco Masini – conductor, 1973

Caterina Cornaro was a historical figure born in Venice in 1454; at the age of 14, she was contracted to marry James de Lusignan, who was the king of Cyprus. They were married four years later in 1472. James died within the year of the marriage from an illness, not in battle, as portrayed in the opera. The story of Caterina Cornaro inspired several operas, Lachner's *Catharina Cornaro*, Halévy's *La reine de Chypre*, Balfe's *The Daughter of St. Marks*, which was issued on LP by Rare Recorded Editions, and Pacini's *La regina di Cipro*.

Donizetti's version begins with a two-scene prologue. Scene 1 takes place in the ballroom of the Cornaro Palace in Venice. It is the wedding day of Caterina and a young French nobleman, Gerardo. A stranger approaches Caterina's father, Andrea and orders him to cancel the wedding. The stranger reveals himself as Mocenigo, a member of the ruling Counsel of Ten, and the Counsel has demanded that Caterina marry Lusignano, the King of Cyprus. Andrea is forced to cancel the proposed wedding. The second scene takes place in Caterina's apartment. Her maid arrives with a message from Gerardo that he is coming to free her from the orders of the Counsel. Andrea warns her that if she does not agree to marry Lusignano, Gerardo will be executed. When Gerardo arrives, Caterina, in despair, declares that she no longer loves him, and Gerardo curses her.

In the first act, Mocenigo, in a square in Nicosia, dreams of the day when the whole island of Cyprus will fall under the domination of Venice. He is informed that Gerardo is in the city. Lusignano enters and expresses his sorrow for Caterina, who has been a victim of political intrigue. Mocenigo's henchman, Strozzi, and his band of assassins have orders to find Gerardo and kill him. Their attempt fails due to the assistance of Lusignano, who explains to Gerardo that Caterina had to obey the orders of the Counsel of Ten. The two men make a vow of friendship.

In the second scene Caterina's attendants try to comfort her. Lusignano enters and tells her that a visitor requests an audience. The visitor is Gerardo; they both confess that they still love each other. Mocenigo enters and denounces Caterina as an adultress. Lusignano calls for the guards to arrest Mocenigo, who leaps to a balcony and waves a scarf signaling people to start a rebellion, but the soldiers arrive to take him prisoner. In the final act, set in the hall of the Royal Palace, Gerardo calls on soldiers to follow him into the battle in the streets between the Cypriots and Venetians. Caterina offers a prayer for victory. Her prayer is answered, but Lusignano is carried in, mortally wounded. In her final aria, Caterina asks the people to swear faith to her as Queen.

This performance of Caterina Cornaro was reviewed in Opera by Enrico Tellini. He said that it was one of the most important happenings of the year. He wrote: "The title role was sung by Leyla Gencer who was in glorious voice. Giacomo Aragall sang with enthusiasm and clear pronunciation, while Renato Bruson was so elegant in his phrasing that his singing appeared a lesson." Tellini was less enthusiastic about Plinio Clabassi, but I admire him. However, I certainly agree with Tellini in regard to the other singers. Carlo Felice Cillario's conducting is excellent.

Caterina Cornaro was premiered on January 18, 1844. It was not a success. The last 19th-century performance was at Parma on February 2, 1845. This performance was the first revival of the opera since that date. In Fanfare 10:5, Anthony D. Coggi reviewed the recording issued on Rodolphe featuring Montserrat Caballé, Giacomo Aragall, and Ryan Edwards. (That performance was also issued on CD by Phoenix.) In his review he stated that this Gencer/Aragall/Bruson performance was superior, although at that time it was only on LP. While this is not one of Donizetti's best operas, it does have striking moments, and is certainly well worth having. The audience is loud and enthusiastic; there is much applause and shouts of bravo.

Since Caterina Cornaro is a short opera, there are 14 bonus tracks from a live performance of Lucrezia Borgia given in October 1971. Both Gencer and Grilli are very good in their roles. On both the Caterina Cornaro complete opera, and the Lucrezia Borgia excerpts the sound is good. Unfortunately there is no booklet, only a list of bands. ---Bob Rose, arkivmusic.com

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