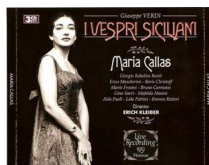


Verdi - I Vespri Siciliani (Kleiber) [1997]

Written by bluesever

Friday, 21 January 2011 10:07 - Last Updated Friday, 13 June 2014 21:31

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Disc: 1 1. *I Vespri Siciliani: Sinfonia* 2. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Primo: Al cielo natio* (Coro, Tebaldo, Roberto) 3. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Primo: Qual s'offre al mio sguardo* (Vaudemont, Bethune) 4. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Primo: In alto mare e battuto dai venti* - (Elena) 5. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Primo: O donna!* - (Arrigo, Elena, Ninetta) 6. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Primo: Qual e il tuo nome?* (Monforte, Arrigo) 7. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Secondo: O patria, o cara patria* - (Procida) 8. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Secondo: O tu, Palermo, terra adorata* - (Procida) 9. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Secondo: Ai nostri fidi* - (Procida) 10. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Secondo: Quale, o prode, al tuo coraggio* - (Elena, Arrigo) 11. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Secondo: Cavalier, questo foglio* - (Bethune, Arrigo) 12. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Secondo: Il rossor mi copri* - (Danieli, Coro) 13. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Terzo: Sì, m'abborriva ed a ragione!* - (Monforte, Bethune) 14. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Terzo: In braccio alle dovizie* (Monforte) Disc: 2 1. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Terzo: Sogno, o son desto?* - (Arrigo, Monforte) 2. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Terzo: Ma che? Fuggi lo sguardo mio* - (Monforte, Arrigo) 3. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Terzo: Balletto* 4. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Terzo: O splendide feste!* - (Coro, Elena, Procida) 5. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Terzo: Colpo orrendo, inaspettato!* - (Procida, Elena, Danieli, Coro) 6. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quarto: E' di Monforte il cenno* - (Arrigo) 7. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quarto: Giorno di pianto* - (Arrigo) 8. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quarto: O sdegni miei, tacete* - (Elena, Arrigo) 9. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quarto: Arrigo! Ah! parli a un core* - (Elena)

Disc: 3

1. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quarto: Pensado a me! E' dolce raggio* - (Arrigo) 2. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quarto: Amica man, sollievo al martir nostro* - (Procida, Elena) 3. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quarto: Addio, mia patria amata* - (Elena, Coro, Procida, Arrigo, Monforte) 4. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quarto: De profundis* - (Coro) 5. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quarto: O ministro di morte* - (Monforte, Elena, Procida, Arrigo) 6. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quinto: Si celebri alfine* - (Coro) 7. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quinto: Merce, dilette amiche* - (Elena) 8. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quinto: La brezza aleggia intorno* - (Arrigo, Elena) 9. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quinto: Al tuo cor generoso* - (Procida, Elena) 10. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quinto: Ecco, per l'aura spiegasi* - (Arrigo, Elena) 11. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quinto: In fra di noi si oppone* - (Elena, Arrigo) 12. *I Vespri Siciliani: Atto Quinto: Deh! vieni; il mio mortale dolor* - (Arrigo, Monforte, Procida, Elena)

Maria Callas - soprano Giorgio Kokolios Bardi - tenor Enzo Mascherini - baritone Boris Christoff - bass Mario Friosini - bass baritone Bruno Carmassi - bass Gino Sarri - tenor Mafalda Masini - mezzo soprano Aldo Paoli - tenor Coro & Orchestra del Teatro Comunale Erich Kleiber - conductor Live Florence, Italy 1951

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This live recording, made on May 26, 1951 in Florence, has been available on one label or another for many years, unfortunately in almost unlistenable sound. Callas fans, of course, do not mind; it is the only souvenir of a role she sang very rarely and at a point in her career when she was still singing Brünnhilde in addition to Norma, Aida, Abigaille, and Turandot. Furthermore, it stars Boris Christoff as Procida and is led by the great Erich Kleiber.

The big news is that the masters for this set are different from the ones used to produce the earlier recordings: these infinitely clearer tapes are from the personal collection of the Earl of Harewood and were actually made for EMI producer Walter Legge. Don't get me wrong--the sound is still substandard; but every word and note can be heard. Legge wanted to hear only the singers, so the overture was not recorded. Not only can we live without it, but it allows the opera to fit on two well-packed CDs.

Callas' performance of the rebellious Austrian Duchess Elena is spectacular. Near the opera's start she must begrudgingly entertain the French with a song. Callas, using her most veiled, menacing voice, gets the double meaning from the text, dipping low into chest voice without sacrificing any stellar top notes. In her two duets with her tenor/lover Arrigo, she's magnificent as well; the second duet, in Act 4, closes with a perfect run from high C to the F-sharp octaves below. Her "Bolero" in the opera's last act is jaunty and elegant, but she interpolates a high E at the end that cracks in two before coming together again. In ensembles she's thoroughly present.

Cristoff is at his most cavernously eloquent, but the rest of the cast, in a word, stinks. Kokolios-Bardi (Arrigo) happily was almost never heard from again, and Enzo Mascherini, who could be impressive, is anything but on this recording. Kleiber's leadership is tight and tense. Yes, this is worth it--for Callas. And again, the sound is 100 percent better than on previous releases, which gets it to about a 4. ---Robert Levine, ClassicsToday.com

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