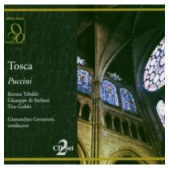
Puccini - Tosca (Tebaldi, Di Stefano) [1998]



CD1 *1. Tosca: "Ah!... Finalmente" (Angelotti) 6:00 2. Tosca: "Dammi i' colori... Recondita armonia" (Cavaradossi) 4:27 3. Tosca: "Gente la dentro!" (Cavaradossi) 1:07 4. Tosca: "Mario!... Mario!... Son qui" (Tosca) 2:56 5. Tosca: "Non la sospiri la nostra casetta" (Tosca) 4:16 6. Tosca: "Qual occhio al mondo" (Tosca) 5:12 7. Tosca: "È buona la mia Tosca" (Cavaradossi) 3:34 8. Tosca: "Sommo giubilo, Eccellenza!" (Sacristan) 2:01 9. Tosca: "Un tal baccano in chiesa!" (Scarpia) 4:39 10. Tosca: "Mario?! Mario?!" (Tosca) 4:59 11. Tosca: "Dove son?... Potessi coglierti" (Tosca) 3:09 12. Tosca: "Và Tosca! Nel tuo cuor... Te Deum" (Scarpia) 4:15 13. Tosca: "Tosca è un buon falco" (Scarpia) 5:11* CD2: *1. Tosca: "O galantuomo" (Scarpia) 6:26 2. Tosca: "Ed or fra noi parliam" (Scarpia) 8:23 3. Tosca: "Floria!... Amore" (Cavaradossi, Tosca) 3:28 4. Tosca: "La povera mia cena fu interrotta" (Scarpia, Tosca) 5:56 5. Tosca: "Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore" (Tosca) 4:04 6. Tosca: "Vedi, le man giunte" (Tosca) 5:39 7. Tosca: "Tosca, finalmente mia!" (Tosca, Scarpia) 6:13 8. Tosca: "Io de' sospiri" (Shepherd Boy) 6:25 9. Tosca: "Mario Cavaradossi? A voi!" (Gaoler) 4:35 10. Tosca: "E lucean le stelle" (Cavaradossi) 3:55 11. Tosca: "Franchigia a Floria Tosca" (Cavaradossi) 2:37 12. Tosca: "O dolci mani" (Cavaradossi) 3:14 13. Tosca: "Amaro sol per te" (Cavaradossi) 3:12 14. Tosca: "Trionfal di nuova speme" (Cavaradossi) 0:57 15. Tosca: "L'ora!... Son pronto" (Cavaradossi) 2:49 16. Tosca: "Presto su Mario, su presto! Andiamo" (Tosca) 1:44* Giuseppe Di Stefano (Tenor), Virgilio Carbonari (Bass), Renata Tebaldi (Soprano), Tito Gobbi (Baritone), Nicola Zaccaria (Bass), Giuseppe Morresi (Bass), Antonio Negri (Boy Alto), Franco Piva (Bass), Piero de Palma (Tenor) Milan Teatro alla Scala Orchestra Milan Teatro alla Scala Chorus Gianandrea Gavazzeni - conductor

First the bad news. The sound on this recording, from a live 1959 La Scala performance, is pretty dim. There's a strange echo early in the first act (which thankfully dissipates), and considerable congestion in loud orchestral passages, but fortunately the voices are captured reasonably well. The sound, understandably, could be a serious impediment for many listeners. If however, one can hear past the sound be prepared to experience one of the great performances of this opera.

The strength of any performance depends on the ability of Tosca to command attention. This of course can be accomplished through beauty of voice, dramatic intent or charisma. Tebaldi's Tosca, by the time of this recording, had its share of all three qualities. The sheer beauty of her voice is generally taken for granted, but the emotional range she exhibits here makes her presence felt whenever she's on stage. This is a fully realized performance free of generalizations and emotional clichés. Her best and most compelling work is of course in the second act- her "vissi d'arte," gorgeously sung in the purest of tones, has all the pathos anyone could possibly wish to hear.

DeStefano is a very fine Cavaradossi, he sings securely and is emotionally varied. Whatever vocal difficulties he might have experienced at this point in his career are not evident on this recording. His "vittoria" is thrilling and it brings the house down.

Gobbi gives another wonderful performance. He was born with the voice of a villain. His talent and deep understanding of this role is such that he has no need to resort to artificial colors or sneers to make his dramatic points. His Scarpia is noble, powerful and inherently evil.

Maestro Gianandrea Gavazzeni conducts with authority. Flexible enough to meet the needs of his singers, he's also able to supply whatever drama the music demands. The surging melody, followed by the soft reprise of Scarpia's theme that ends the second act is chilling in its sense of doom. The orchestral interlude that precedes "e lucevan le stelle" is charged with the mood of depressing melancholy that pervades this opera. --- Robert T. Martin, amazon.com

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