Gioachino Rossini - L'Assedio di Corinto (1992)

Disc: 1

1. Sinf - London SO/Thomas Schippers
2. Act One, Scene One: Signor, un sol tuo cenno - Ambosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy *play*
3. Act One, Scene One: Del vincitor superbo di Bisanzio - Harry Theyard
4. Act One, Scene One: In cosi reo periglio - Ambosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy/Shirley Verrett/
Gwynne Howell
5. Act One, Scene One: La spada omicida - Gwynne Howell/Harry Theyard/Shirley Verrett/
Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
6. Act One, Scene One: Tua figlia m e promessa - Shirley Verrett/Harry Theyard/Beverly Sills
7. Act One, Scene One: Destin terribile! - Shirley Verrett/Harry Theyard/Beverly Sills
8. Act One, Scene One: Di morte il suon mando - Ambosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy/Beverly Sills/
Harry Theyard/Shirley Verrett
9. Act One: Scene One: La data fe rammento - Ambosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy/Beverly Sills/
Harry Theyard/Shirley Verrett
10. Act One, Scene Two: Dal ferro del forte - Ambosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
11. Act One, Scene Two: Duce di tanti eroi - Justino Diaz/Ambosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy *play*
12. Act One, Scene Two: Trionfammo, signor - Robert Lloyd/Justino Diaz
13. Act One, Scene Two: Capo all'oste ribelle - Justino Diaz/Harry Theyard
14. Act One, Scene Two: O ciel! fermate... - Beverly Sills/Justino Diaz/Harry Theyard/Delia Wallis/
Robert Lloyd/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
15. Act One, Scene Two: Ritrovo l'amante nel crudo nemico - Beverly Sills/Justino Diaz/Harry Theyard/
Delia Wallis/Robert Lloyd/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
16. Act One, Scene Two: Pamira mi sei resa - Beverly Sills/Justino Diaz/Harry Theyard/Delia Wallis/
Robert Lloyd/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
17. Act One, Scene Two: L'alma che geme - Beverly Sills/Justino Diaz/Harry Theyard/Delia Wallis/

Robert Lloyd/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy

Disc: 2
1. Act Two: Cielo! che diverro? - Beverly Sills
2. Act Two: Si, ferite, il chieggo, il merto - Beverly Sills
3. Act Two: Dal soggiorno degli estinti - Beverly Sills
4. Act Two: Ah! che spiegar non posso - Beverly Sills play
5. Act Two: Sgombra il timor - Justino Diaz/Beverly Sills
6. Act Two: Che vedo? Ohime... tu piangi? - Justino Diaz
7. Act Two: Potrei lasciar che l'alma - Beverly Sills/Justino Diaz
8. Act Two: Vinci, Pamira, il terror - Justino Diaz/Delia Wallis/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
9. Act Two: Divin profeta, dator di bene - Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy play
10. Act Two: Pamira... Questo altar - Justino Diaz/Beverly Sills/Shirley Verrett/Robert Lloyd
11. Act Two: E suo germano! - Justino Diaz/Beverly Sills/Shirley Verrett
12. Act Two: Sian tolti a lui quei ferri - Justino Diaz/Beverly Sills/Shirley Verrett
13. Act Two: Oh, sol di chi t'adora - Justino Diaz/Beverly Sills/Shirley Verrett
14. Act Two: Corinto in suon di sdegno - Robert Lloyd/Justino Diaz/Shirley Verrett/Beverly Sills/ Harry Theyard/Ambrosian Opr Chor...
15. Act Two: Ebbene, il nuovo sole - Robert Lloyd/Justino Diaz/Shirley Verrett/Beverly Sills/ Harry Theyard/Ambrosian Opr Chor...

Disc: 3
1. Act Three: Avanziam... questo e il luogo! - Shirley Verrett
2. Act Three: Ciel! chi vegg'io? - Gaetano Scano/Shirley Verrett
3. Act Three: Non temer, d'un basso affetto - Shirley Verrett
4. Act Three: Signor, che tutto puoi - Beverly Sills/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy/Harry Theyard
5. Act Three: Oh come al cor soavi - Harry Theyard
6. Act Three: D'ogni intorno vegliate - Justino Diaz/Harry Theyard
7. Act Three: Pria svenar con ferme ciglia - Justino Diaz/Harry Theyard play
8. Act Three: Speri invan - Harry Theyard/Justino Diaz/Shirley Verrett
9. Act Three: All'empio in braccio - Harry Theyard/Justino Diaz/Shirley Verrett
10. Act Three: Tu che tanto orgoglioso ostenti - Harry Theyard/Justino Diaz/Shirley Verrett
11. Act Three: Di generoso, nobile - Shirley Verrett/Justino Diaz
12. Act Three: O mio Cleomene! - Shirley Verrett/Harry Theyard
13. Act Three: Ciel! Ella! - Harry Theyard/Beverly Sills/Shirley Verrett
14. Act Three: Celeste prowidenza - Harry Theyard/Beverly Sills/Shirley Verrett
15. Act Three: Tutto percorsi il marzial recinto - Gwynne Howell/Harry Theyard
16. Act Three: Chiuso serbate il cor - Gwynne Howell/Beverly Sills/Shirley Verrett/Harry Theyard/
Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
17. Act Three: Nube di sangue intrisa - Gwynne Howell/Beverly Sills/Shirley Verrett/Harry Theyard
/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
18. Act Three: Questo nome, che suona vittoria - Gwynne Howell/Beverly Sills/Shirley

Verrett/Harry Theyard/
Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy *play*
19. Act Three: L'ora fatal s'appressa - Beverly Sills
20. Act Three: Giusto ciel! - Beverly Sills/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
21. Act Three: Vittoria! Vittoria! - Beverly Sills/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
22. Act Three: Parmi vederlo, ahi misero - Beverly Sills/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy
23. Act Three: Ma qual mai suona - Beverly Sills/Ambrosian Opr Chor/John McCarthy/Justino Diaz

Pamira - Beverly Sills
Neocle - Shirley Verrett
Maometto - Justino Diaz
Cleomene - Harry Theyard
Jero - Gwynne Howell
Omar - Robert Lloyd
Ismene - Delia Wallis
Adrasto - Gaetano Scano

Ambrosian Opera Chorus

London Symphony Orchestra Thomas Schippers - conductor, 1974

Libretto by Luigi Balocchi and Alexandre Soumet, based on Cesare della Valle's libretto for Rossini's Maometto II

Le Siege de Corinthe premiered at the Paris Opéra on October 9, 1826, to enthusiastic acclaim by critics and public alike. Although Rossini had been in Paris working at the Theâtre Italien since 1824, he now made his first attempt at creating an Italian opera which would please the fastidious French public. The tastes of the French ran strong, and their opera was imbued with their national identity. With his new French honorary title ("Premier Compositeur du Roi et Inspecteur General du Chant en France") he set about revising his Neapolitan opera, Mahomet II, for its premiere at the Opéra.

The original work, Mahomet II, was experimental in many respects: the set pieces did not slavishly conform to the early- nineteenth-century standard operatic forms, but were instead suited to their specific dramatic purposes. It was written to showcase the vocal talents of Isabella Colbran, an Italian coloratura star who dominated Rossini's Neapolitan writing. The opera was initially revised in 1823 for the Venetian stage: Rossini added an overture, a trio, and changed the ending so that he could include the joyous rondo from La Donna del Lago.

Received coolly in its initial state, the opera was booed and hissed in its second form -- hardly the success the composer had hoped for.

For the French revision, Rossini hired two literati, Balocchi and Soumet, to rewrite the libretto. They kept the original story line but changed the setting: instead of the Venetians, the Turks are laying siege to the Greek city of Corinth, and the Greeks are fighting for their very survival. The ending remains tragic: Corinth is dramatically razed to the ground and Pamira kills herself rather than marry the Turkish sultan. Feelings in France ran high for the cause of Greek independence at the time, and the librettists were able to capitalize on those emotions. Rossini even conducted a benefit concert for the Greek cause and raised quite a sum.

The score is greatly changed; the original formal experiments are dispensed with and the florid writing is made simpler. The famous "Terzettone" that spans two scenes of Act I in the original opera is completely redone into a smaller, more comprehensible piece. Although the result is an opera that is less dramatic and less grand, it is also more coherent. The flavor of the recitative now reflects that of the French language; the orchestration is richer, with more brass and woodwind writing, and the role of Neocles is now a tenor voice, rather than an Italian contralto. Rossini used a Gloria from a mass composed in 1820 as the basis of the new, splendid overture, and also as the basis of the grand finale to Act II. ---Rita Laurance, Rovi

A few weeks before this performance, Beverly Sills made her Met debut in this all-but-unknown Rossini opera. As one critic explained, “The arias are vocal extravaganzas that would terrorize all but a few singers today.” But as Pamira, the young Greek woman who loves the Turkish leader, Maometto (Justino Díaz), who conquers Corinth with tragic consequences, Sills herself was really the conquering hero. “Perfectly phrased abandon,” was one description of her singing, and the audience simply went berserk. Shirley Verrett co-stars in the pants role of Neocle, the young Greek captain who has been promised Pamira in marriage.

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