

Irma González - En Vivo (1945 - 1965)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 21 September 2015 16:08 - Last Updated Monday, 21 September 2015 16:11

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CD1 1. *Madama Butterfly: Act II: Che tua madre* 2:44 2. *Madama Butterfly: Act III: Con onor muore* 2:53 3. *La bohème, Act I: Si. Mi chiamano Mimi* 4:49 4. *La bohème, Act III: Donde lieta uscì* 3:09 5. *La bohème, Act II: Quando me'n vo'* 2:30 6. *Manon Lescaut, Act II: In quelle trine morbide* 2:31 7. *Tosca: Act II: Vissi d'arte* 3:53 8. *Tosca: Act III: Ah! Franchigia a Floria Tosca ? O dolci mani mansuete e pure* 10:45 9. *Turandot, Act I: Signore ascolta* 2:54 10. *L'amico Fritz, Act I: Son pocchi fiori* 3:58 11. *Pagliacci, Act I: Qual fiamma avea nel guardo* 4:58 12. *Andrea Chenier, Act IV: Vicino a te s'acqueta* 7:06 13. *Mefistofele: Act III: The Death of Margherita: L'altra notte in fondo al mare* 4:27 14. *Mefistofele: Act III: The Death of Margherita: Spunta ? l'aurora pallida ?* 2:57 15. *Norma: Norma, Act II: Mira, o Norma* 5:54

CD2 1. *Manon: Act II: Allons! ? il le faut! ? Adieu, notre petite table* 4:03 2. *Manon: Act III: N'est-ce plus ma main* 3:49 3. *Herodiade, Act I: Il est doux, il est bon* 3:37 4. *Carmen: Carmen, Act III: Recitative: C'est des contrebandiers le refuge ordinaire* 7:00 5. *The Maid of Orleans, Act I: Aria: Adieu, forets* 4:27 6. *La traviata, Act III: Addio, del passato* 2:39 7. *Aida: Aida, Act III: O patria mia* 4:33 8. *Messa da Requiem: Dies irae: Recordare* 4:43 9. *Otello: Act I: Già nella notte* 10:26 10. *Otello: Act IV: Era piu calmo?* 10:19 11. *Otello: Act IV: Ave Maria* 4:21 12. *La forza del destino, Act IV: Pace, pace mio Dio!* 5:23 13. *La rueda de la fortuna (Meet Me in St. Louis)* 10:17

Irma Gonzalez – soprano
Dora de la Peña – mezzo-soprano
Oralia Dominguez – mezzo-soprano
Aurora Woodrow – mezzo-soprano
Giuseppe di Stefano – tenor
Plácido Domingo – tenor
Jon Vickers – tenor
Orquesta de la Ópera
Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional
Carlo Felice Cillario – conductor
Oliviero de Fabritiis – conductor
Igor Markevitch - conductor

The first time I ever encountered the name of the Mexican soprano Irma Gonzales was in a recording bought from 'mr Tape' featuring the Pinkerton of Mario Del Monaco. Excerpts of this performance can be listened to on the Bongiovanni label but not on this two cd set. She does sing Butterfly on this compilation though but the recording dates back six years prior to the Del Monaco performance. It displays the soprano at her very debut in 1945. A rarity I suppose is the duet from Tosca with the young and vibrant Placido Domingo from a 1965 performance. Much better by the way than the over-parted Chenier of di Stefano (1961) which we can hear in the final duet, a performance in which the even younger Placido sang the Abbe and the

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Incredibile!! The double cd portrait has live recordings from Turandot, L'Amico Fritz, Mefistofele, Norma (with Oralia Dominguez), Pagliacci, Herodiade, Carmen, Forza, Aida, Otello (with Vickers 1965) Traviata, Manon Lescaut, Manon, Boheme and the Verdi Requiem .
---Plácido Domingo, operanostalgia.be

When she made her debut in 1939, Giuseppe di Stefano had not yet sung in public, Jon Vickers had not begun vocal lessons, and Plácido Domingo had not been born, yet she sang with all of them—and with Ezio Pinza, Cesare Valletti, Mario del Monaco, Cesare Siepi, Giulietta Simionato, Grace Bumbry, Ettore Bastianini, Sherrill Milnes, Oralia Dominguez, Boris Christoff, Richard Tucker, and Giuseppe Taddei. There's a remarkable 1980 video (in color) on YouTube of her singing "In questa reggia" from Turandot, at age 64, with a wonderful Calaf named David Portilla. She worked with such conductors as Kleiber, Klemperer, Ansermet, Casals, Walter, Beecham, and Markevitch. Her voice combined the rich, creamy colors of Renata Tebaldi with the brilliant high range of Marisa Galvany, but she was a more intense interpreter than the former and a more musical and finished vocalist than the latter. In short, she had it all. As a teacher, her most famous pupil was tenor Francisco Araiza. She died in 2008 at the age of 92.

By and large, the singing on this two-CD set is simply extraordinary. It takes one's breath away. The final phrases of "Vissi d'arte," for instance, are sung exactly as written, without the usual breaks or distortions that sopranos "traditionally" throw into it. The "Recordare" from the Verdi Requiem, with the little-known mezzo Aurora Woodrow, shows off her melting legato; the Ballatella from Pagliacci and "L'altra notte" from Mefistofele display a fine trill. "O patria mia" showcases her faultless line and extremely musical phrasing. Only once, for me, does she disappoint: Her "Addio del passato" is the healthiest-sounding performance I've ever heard, too loud and too insensitive to text. Not bad for a soprano you've never heard of before.

Considering that this is a Mexican production, the transfers are fairly good. At least some attempt was made to remove some of the surface noise, but not much, and the high notes are somewhat distorted in places depending on the quality of the original. On CD 2, there are also four errors in transfer: The Hérodiade aria is pitched a whole tone too high, Micaela's aria from Carmen a quarter-tone too low, "Adieu, forêts" a half-tone high, and the "Recordare" a half-tone low, but when the sound is clear and full, with no distortion or blasting, you can hear the voice in all its glory. The bonus track comes from 1945, when González traveled to New York to record as soundtrack double to Judy Garland in the Mexican version of Meet Me in St. Louis, oddly renamed The Wheel of Fortune. Not too surprisingly, the best conducting comes from the well-known names here: Oliviero de Fabritiis, Carlo Felice Cellario, Anton Guadagno, and Igor

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Markevitch. The lavish booklet is full of interesting photos, including one with a baby-faced, 21-year-old Domingo, but alas, the text is only in Spanish. Full recording data is on the inside back cover. If you are a lover of outstanding vocal art, this has to be the surprise issue of the year. ---Lynn René Bayley, arkivmusic.com

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