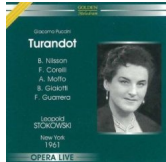


Puccini - Turandot (Stokowski) [1961]

Written by bluesever

Monday, 19 April 2010 16:21 - Last Updated Wednesday, 26 March 2014 13:01

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Disc 1 1 *Popolo di Pekino!* 2:39 2 *Padre! Mio padre!* 2:51 3 *Gira la cote! Gira!* 2:41 4 *Perchè tarda la luna?* 3:11 5 *Là, sui monti dell'est* 1:10 6 *O giovinetto!* 4:27 7 *Figlio, che fai?* 1:39 8 *Fermo! Che fai? T'arresta!* 3:42 9 *Noite nera senza lumicino* 2:43 10 *Signore, ascolta* 2:57 11 *Non piangere, liù!* 2:33 12 *Ah! Per l'ultima volta!* 3:06 13 *Olà, Pang! Olà, Pong!* 3:12 14 *Ho una casa nell'Honan* 3:21 15 *O mondo, pieno di pazzi innamorati* 2:48 16 *Non v'è in Cina* 1:44 17 *Interludio orchestrale* 1:00 18 *Gravi, enormi ed imponenti* 2:43 19 *Un giuramento atroce mi costringe* 2:56 20 *Diecimila anni* 2:44

Disc 2

1 *In questa reggia* 6:27 2 *Straniero, ascolta!* 2:25 3 *Guizza al pari di fiamma* 2:08 4 *Gelo che ti dà foco* 2:48 5 *Figlio del cielo!* 2:59 6 *Tre enigmi mi hai proposto!* 1:36 7 *Ai tuoi piedi ci prostriam* 2:09 8 *Così comanda Turandot* 3:25 9 *Nessun dorma!* 3:10 10 *Tu che guardi le stelle!* 4:30 11 *Principessa divina!* 2:38 12 *Quel nome!* 0:58 13 *Chi pose tanta forza nel tuo cuore?* 3:44 14 *Tu che di gel sei cinta* 4:59 15 *Liù...bonta!* 2:33 16 *Principessa di morte!* 3:15 17 *Che è mai di me?* 3:12 18 *So il tuo nome!* 1:27 19 *Diecimila anni* 3:12

Turandot.....Birgit Nilsson Calff.....Franco Corelli Liù.....Anna Moffo
Timur.....Bonaldo Giaiotti Ping.....Frank Guarrera Pang.....Robert
Nagy Pong.....Charles Anthony Emperor Altoum.....Alessio De Paolis
Mandarin.....Calvin Marsh Prince of Persia.....Edilio Ferraro [Debut]
Servant.....Thomas Russell [Debut] Servant.....Craig Crosson
Servant.....Robert Bishop [Debut] Executioner.....Howard Sayette [Debut]
Executioner.....Wally Adams Executioner.....William Burdick Metropolitan Opera
Chorus & Orchestra Conductor.....Leopold Stokowski Metropolitan Opera House
February 24, 1961

Finally Puccini's "Turandot" came to the stage of the Metropolitan Opera. It had been absent since 1/8/1930, and one of the reasons for its absence was the lack of a soprano to sing the title role. Puccini wrote a ferociously demanding part, one that requires extraordinary strength of voice and stamina.

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Birgit Nilsson sang it last night, and left no question about her mastery of the role. From her [first] phrases in the second act-she appears briefly in the first act and does not sing-the audience knew she was in prime voice.

As the act proceeded and Miss Nilsson swung into the great aria, "In questa reggia." she was triumphant. Her voice soared full and solidly, over orchestra, chorus and soloists, up to a tremendous high C that sounded as if there were still plenty in reserve.

And Franco Corelli, as Calaf, was little less impressive. Mr. Corelli had made his Metropolitan Opera debut in "Il Trovatore" a short time ago. His singing at that time carried little suggestion that he was capable of the resplendant kind of singing he demonstrated on this occasion. His voice, solidly anchored, was easily produced, and he matched Miss Nilsson note for note. It is a voice of large size. That we already knew. But it is a tenore di forza with a suave vocal quality. When Mr. Corelli let loose, he did not yell. He was able to attain great volume without straining his vocal cords, and by doing so, he preserved the stylistic integrity of the role. In addition, he made a handsome prince, and acted with a good deal of sympathy. He is not yet the most subtle of actors, but his work never was in bad taste.

This was a brand-new production, with a conductor brand-new to the Metropolitan. He was Leopold Stokowski, who only a short time ago suffered a fractured hip. Mr. Stokowski made his way slowly and valiantly to the podium and was greeted by a standing ovation. Ovations, indeed were the order of the evening. The house went wild after each act. It was a handsome production, full of color, elaborate costumes and scenery. The Metropolitan Opera did not stint. Handsome blues, golds and bronzes dominated the stage. The singers were made up à la chinoise without veering into the Mikado or Chu-Chin-Chow style. This is one of the best shows in town as it turned out.

In the first scene of the second act there are several drops containing Chinese ideographs. Those in the audience who wondered if they actually had a meaning can be told that they had. They represent country houses, trees, the calm and peace of the country, and are the literary equivalent of what Ping is singing about at the moment.

Originally the production was scheduled to be done by Yoshio Aoyama, who had designed the popular "Butterfly" in the Met repertory. But in this impossibly insane Met season, plagued by

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deaths and illnesses, Mr. Aoyama fell ill and was succeeded by Nathaniel Merrill, who earlier this season had staged "L'Elisir d'Amore." Mr. Merrill followed Mr. Aoyama's ideas, but he had little time to work them out. Under the circumstances, not much should be said except in praise that the production got on the boards at all. There were a few weak moments, however, and perhaps they can be corrected later on. Mr. Merrill seems to have a horror of anybody's just standing still and singing. He makes his characters fuss with something, or lie on the ground, or jump on and off chairs, or indulge in some unnecessary kind of stage business. A quieter approach would have been welcome.

"Turandot," of course, succeeds or fails in accordance with the virtues of the two principal singers. With Miss Nilsson and Mr. Corelli in as brilliant voice as they were, "Turandot" had to be a success. The other roles were well sung too.

Anna Moffo sounded a little uncomfortable in her first-act "Signore, ascolta," but she more than redeemed herself in the third-act death scene, sung with pathos and conviction. The trio of Ping, Pang, and Pong were well sung and acted by Frank Guarrera, Robert Nagy and Charles Anthony. These three singers play an important part in the opera; they are equivalent to the "commedia dell'arte" masks and their ensemble numbers are of unusual beauty. Messers Guarrera, Nagy and Anthony sang with complete accuracy.

Mr. Stokowski conducted, as always, without a baton. Could this, too, have been a Metropolitan first? Baton or not, the singers seemed to know exactly what he wanted; at least, they followed him throughout. Mr. Stokowski being Mr. Stokowski, there were bound to be a few little changes in the score. One extremely noticeable one occurred during Turandot's aria, "In quest reggia,": where Mr. Stokowski dropped all of the instrumentation except the tympani. He probably figured that it was more effective and dramatic his way rather than Puccini's.

He came on the stage after the performance for three bows. The principals were called almost twenty times. It was quite an evening. ---Harold C. Schonberg, N.Y. Times

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[back](#)