

BELLINI I Puritani

2 CDs

Callas • Di Stefano • Panerai • Rossi-Lemeni

Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan

Tullio Serafin

(Recorded in 1953)



Great Opera Recordings

Vincenzo

BELLINI

(1801-1835)

I Puritani

Elvira	Maria Callas (soprano)
Arturo	Giuseppe Di Stefano (tenor)
Riccardo	Rolando Panerai (baritone)
Giorgio	Nicola Rossi-Lemeni (bass)
Bruno	Angelo Mercuriali (tenor)
Gualtiero Valton	Carlo Forti (bass)
Enrichetta	Aurora Cattelani (soprano)

Chorus and Orchestra of Teatro alla Scala, Milan

Tullio Serafin

Chorus Master: Vittore Veneziani

Recorded 24th, 26th, 27th, 29th, 30th and 31st March and 1st and 3rd April 1953

in the Basilica di Santa Eufemia, Milan

First issued as Columbia 33CX 1058 through 1060

Reissue Producer and Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

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CD 1	69:09	13	<i>Il rito augusto si compia senza me</i> (Valton, Enrichetta, Arturo, Giorgio)	3:07
Act I				
Scene 1	22:06	14	<i>Cavalier! ... Se ti è d'uopo di consiglio</i> (Enrichetta, Arturo)	3:15
1	3:38	15	<i>Son vergin vezzosa</i> (Elvira, Enrichetta, Arturo, Giorgio, Valton, Chorus)	3:36
2	4:30	16	<i>Sulla virginea testa</i> (Enrichetta, Arturo)	0:42
3	3:31	17	<i>Ferma. Invan rapir pretendi</i> (Riccardo, Arturo, Enrichetta, Chorus)	4:57
4	2:26	18	<i>Dov'è Arturo?</i> (Elvira, Riccardo, Chorus, Bruno, Giorgio, Valton)	3:19
5	2:55	19	<i>Oh vieni al tempio - fedele Arturo</i> (Elvira, Bruno, Chorus, Riccardo, Giorgio)	4:58
6	3:08	20	<i>Ma tu già mi fuggi?</i> (Elvira, Bruno, Chorus, Riccardo, Giorgio)	2:04
7	1:58			
		CD 2		73:19
Scene 2	47:03	Act II		41:30
8	2:20	1	<i>Ah ... dolor! Ah, terror!</i> (Chorus)	5:37
9	6:58	2	<i>Qual novella?</i> (Chorus, Giorgio)	2:22
10	2:48	3	<i>Cinta di fiori e col bel crin disciolto</i> (Giorgio, Chorus)	4:53
11	2:29	4	<i>E di morte lo stral non sarà lento</i> (Riccardo, Giorgio, Chorus)	2:45
12	6:29	5	<i>O rendetemi la speme</i> (Elvira, Giorgio, Riccardo)	1:43

6	<i>Qui la voce sua soave</i> (Elvira, Giorgio, Riccardo)	8:41	14	<i>Qual suon! Alcun s'appressa</i> (Arturo, Chorus)	1:50
7	<i>Vien, diletto, è in ciel la luna!</i> (Elvira)	2:51	15	<i>Son già lontani!</i> (Arturo)	3:18
8	<i>Il rival salvar tu dèi</i> (Giorgio, Riccardo)	4:48	16	<i>Fini ... me lassa</i> (Elvira, Arturo)	3:06
9	<i>Se tra il buio un fantasma vedrai</i> (Giorgio, Riccardo)	2:28	17	<i>Ch'ei provò lontan da me?</i> (Elvira, Arturo)	3:10
10	<i>Riccardo! Riccardo!</i> (Giorgio, Riccardo)	2:07	18	<i>Vieni fra queste braccia</i> (Arturo, Elvira)	2:44
11	<i>Suoni la tromba</i> (Riccardo, Giorgio)	3:16	19	<i>Alto là! Fedel drappello</i> (Chorus, Arturo, Elvira, Riccardo, Giorgio)	1:11
Act III		31:49	20	<i>Credeasi, misera!</i> (Arturo, Elvira, Riccardo, Giorgio, Chorus)	2:09
12	<i>Son salvo, alfin son salvo</i> (Arturo)	4:35	21	<i>Suon d'araldi?</i> (Chorus, Giorgio, Riccardo, Arturo, Elvira)	6:53
13	<i>A una fonte afflitto e solo</i> (Elvira, Arturo)	2:53			

Producer's Note

I Puritani was the first opera Maria Callas recorded with the forces of La Scala for EMI. Produced before EMI's Walter Legge came to Milan to supervise her recordings, the original master is in many ways problematic. First, it was taken down not in La Scala itself, but in a large church whose ample reverberation time often obscures detail. In addition, there are odd balances, with some singers recorded too closely and others too far away. In one section, about a minute and a half into Track 5 of CD 1, the perspective changes dramatically mid-scene, and Riccardo and Bruno seem to have been suddenly transported to the bottom of Jokanaan's cistern. Extraneous noises, tape bumbles, electronic clicks, pre-echo and occasional overload distortion also plague the master tape. Previous CD transfers attempted to remove session noises at the end of some tracks by fading down the ends of arias, adding reverberation and then leaving digital silence before resuming the music – a “solution” which seemed to be worse than the problem. Finally, pitch variations can be found between sections recorded at different times on some previous editions. For this restoration, I used the best portions drawn from eight LP copies. Most of the electronic clicks that remained even on CD editions have been removed, and care has been taken to adjust for the pitch differences between and within each track.

Mark Obert-Thorn

Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835)

I Puritani

Together with Donizetti and Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini stands as one of the great masters of operatic composition during the first half of the nineteenth century. Whereas Rossini sought vocal agility and Donizetti dramatic vigour or unrestrained musical high spirits, Bellini was a painstaking craftsman whose seriousness of purpose and sincerity of utterance gave his works a unique character unmatched by those of his rivals. Born in Catania in Sicily in November 1801, Bellini studied at the Conservatory in Naples. Here one of his teachers, Zingarelli, encouraged him to concentrate on melody, the origin of his fondness for long, beautifully moulded vocal lines set above a simple orchestral accompaniment. Two operas written in Naples were sufficiently successful for Bellini to gain a commission from La Scala in Milan to compose his first mature opera, *Il Pirata* (1827). After two less successful works, he then composed the operas on which his reputation was founded: *I Capuleti e I Montecchi* (1830), *La Sonnambula* (1831), *Norma* (1831), *Beatrice di Tenda* (1833), and *I Puritani* (1835). He died unexpectedly in Paris in September 1835, of an internal inflammation.

I Puritani was commissioned by the Théâtre Italien in Paris in 1834. This new work was to be based upon the play *Têtes rondes et cavaliers* by two French authors Ancelot and Boniface, itself based upon *Old Mortality* by Sir Walter Scott, whose novels were then very much in vogue. The libretto was supplied by Count Carlo Pepoli, replacing Bellini's usual partner Felice Romani, with whom the composer had temporarily fallen out. First performed on 25th January 1835, *I Puritani* was an immediate success, overshadowing another work new to Paris, Donizetti's *Marino Faliero*. The action of *I Puritani* takes place in the middle of the seventeenth century, towards the end of the English Civil War. England is divided between the Royalists, faithful to the Stuart monarchy and leaning towards Catholicism, and the Roundheads, the supporters of Oliver Cromwell and siding with Puritan religious views. King Charles I has been executed and his wife Queen Henrietta has

escaped in disguise. The setting is Plymouth, a Puritan stronghold.

In July 1952 the head of artists and repertoire of EMI's Columbia label, Walter Legge, signed the latest operatic sensation in Italy, Maria Callas, to a contract with his company, although she was also to make two recordings during the next fifteen months with the Italian company CETRA, of Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* (available on Naxos Historical 8.110302-04) and Verdi's *La Traviata*. She quickly entered the recording studios for EMI, initially during February 1953 in Florence with Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. This was quickly followed in March and early April of the same year with this recording of *I Puritani*. Both these recordings were produced by Dino Olivieri, and *I Puritani* was to be the first of the many recordings in which Legge arranged for Callas to record with the choral and orchestral forces of La Scala, Milan, Italy's pre-eminent opera house, and itself a stroke of marketing genius which benefited all concerned. The recording was notable for many reasons: it was both the first recording of this opera, and the first operatic set to be issued with Callas on EMI's new label Angel in the USA, appearing two months before the Florence *Lucia*. It represented the start of the rediscovery on record of the bel-canto repertoire, which took place partly as a result of the development of the long-playing record, and partly through the totally new character which Callas gave to the operas of this repertoire with her smoky tone, vocal agility and dramatic intensity. Previously bel-canto had been viewed in terms of coloratura sopranos, epitomised for instance by the Italian soprano Toti dal Monte and the French diva Lily Pons, the Metropolitan Opera's Lucia for many years. Finally this recording and the earlier *Lucia* reunited Callas with her constant mentor, the conductor Tullio Serafin, who had encouraged her to sing the role of Elvira for the first time in extraordinary circumstances several years earlier.

In January 1949, Callas was singing Brünnhilde in Wagner's *Die Walküre* at La Fenice in Venice.

Margherita Carosio was scheduled to sing Elvira in subsequent performances of *I Puritani*, to be conducted by Serafin, but fell ill. Callas was engaged to replace her, and was requested to learn the entire opera in one week, during which she also had three performances of *Walküre* in which to sing. Despite these difficulties, Callas triumphed in the Bellini opera and soon became the talk of Italy. In the same year she married Giovanni Battista Meneghini, a wealthy Italian industrialist and opera lover who was to become her manager. Her début at La Scala followed in *Aida*, in April 1950, but the expected public success did not materialise. This was to take place over eighteen months later when Callas opened La Scala's 1951/52 season in Verdi's *I Vespri Siciliani* to ecstatic public applause and extraordinarily enthusiastic reviews. For the next seven years La Scala was to be the scene for her greatest triumphs.

Legge assembled a strong cast to surround his new protégée. Singing opposite her was another partner from the Florence *Lucia*, the tenor Giuseppe Di Stefano. Born in 1921, he began to record with EMI in Milan during 1946. He made his début at the Metropolitan Opera in early 1948 and sang there regularly until 1952. In May 1952 he had sung with Callas in performances of *I Puritani* in Mexico City, and they were reunited soon afterwards in Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* at La Scala during December 1952. Possessed of a beautiful, natural tenor voice, Di Stefano was not afraid to 'go for broke' in performance, often to thrilling effect. He was to be one of Callas's most frequent, and exciting, operatic partners. As Riccardo, Legge cast the then young baritone Rolando Panerai. Born in 1924, Panerai was to have a very long career in both the opera house and on record, excelling in a wide range of rôles from Mozart to Verdi. The part of Giorgio was taken by Nicola Rossi-Lemeni, who in 1947 as a member with Callas of a company engaged to sing in Chicago (which in fact went bankrupt before

any performances could be given) had introduced her to the tenor Giovanni Zenatello. He was in the USA to find singers for the 1947 Verona Opera Festival of which he was the Artistic Director, and engaged Callas to sing in *La Gioconda* there in the summer of 1947 – her Italian debut. Rossi-Lemeni was a pre-eminent bass throughout the 1950s on account of his beautiful voice and strong dramatic presence. He was married to the Romanian-born soprano Virginia Zeani.

The final ace in Legge's pack was the conductor Tullio Serafin. Born in 1878 he made his conducting début in 1898 at Ferrara, and was immediately taken on by Toscanini as an assistant. By 1909 he was principal conductor of La Scala, where he widened the repertoire considerably, conducting the first Italian performances of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. Between 1924 and 1934 he was one of the chief conductors of the Italian wing at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He returned to Italy as artistic director and chief conductor of the Rome Opera from 1934 to 1943. He was a major presence in Italian opera both before and after the Second World War, and did much to encourage and support young singers, as the experience with Callas clearly demonstrated. He recorded extensively during the 1950s, when the operatic catalogue on long-playing record was expanding. In this recording he opened up many of the traditional cuts imposed upon *I Puritani* in the theatre, where dramatic swiftness was often more highly regarded than musical integrity. While a considerable amount of the opera was still excised, Serafin's edition was musically and dramatically coherent. Surrounded by fellow artists of the first calibre, Callas in this landmark recording recreated in sound the full extent of Bellini's request to the singer of Elvira to sing *con tutta la disperazione del dolore* (with all the desperation of sorrow).

David Patmore

Synopsis

The action of *I Puritani* takes place in the middle of the seventeenth century, towards the end of the English Civil War. England is divided between the Royalists, faithful to the Stuart monarchy and leaning towards Catholicism, and the Roundheads, the supporters of Oliver Cromwell and siding with Puritan religious views. King Charles I has been executed and his wife Queen Henrietta has escaped in disguise. The setting is Plymouth, a Puritan stronghold.

CD 1

Act I

Scene 1

[1] The *Introduction* opens with an orchestral *Sinfonia*, setting the scene in a fortress in Plymouth. Battlements and turrets are seen, against the mountains in the background. The sun is rising. [2] The voice of the Puritan officer Sir Bruno Robertson is heard, with the soldiers on guard, as the trumpet signals mark the dawn of a new day and the men express their determination to defeat the Stuarts. [3] A bell rings and the sound of the organ is heard, as the Puritans are heard in prayer, with Elvira, daughter of the governor of the town, Lord Gualtiero Valton, the retired Puritan colonel Sir Giorgio, his brother, and the Puritan colonel Sir Riccardo Forth. [4] The people in the fortress sing in celebration of the coming wedding of Elvira. They go, leaving Bruno, who stands aside, observing Riccardo. [5] Riccardo laments Elvira's failure to return his love. Bruno interrupts his musing and suggests that he still has his country and heaven as consolation. Riccardo explains how Elvira's father had agreed to her marriage to him, but when he had approached him, Lord Valton had told him that he had no command over his daughter's heart, and that she was in love with the cavalier, Arturo Talbo. [6] Riccardo laments again his loss of Elvira. [7] Soldiers march past and Bruno urges Riccardo to think of his country and honour, but the

latter continues to dwell on the memory of his tender love.

Scene 2

[8] The new scene is set in Elvira's room. The Gothic windows are open and the battlements of the fortress can be seen. Elvira, in some distress, addresses Giorgio, her uncle, telling him she will never marry Riccardo. [9] She would rather die than marry him, but he tells her that he has persuaded her father to allow her to marry Arturo, in spite of his support for the royalists. Elvira is overjoyed, and Giorgio explains how he had convinced her father, telling him that Elvira would die if she were forced into this marriage. [10] The sound of hunting horns are heard, heralding the arrival of Arturo, granted a safe conduct to the Puritan fortress. Elvira and Giorgio express their joy at the occasion. [11] All gather for the wedding, as Arturo and his retinue, squires and pages, appear, and there is a chorus of praise for the couple, beauty now to be united to valour. [12] Arturo addresses Elvira and the onlookers express their delight at the happiness of the couple. [13] Valton gives Arturo the necessary pass and tells his brother Giorgio to accompany the couple to their wedding. Turning to Enrichetta, he courteously tells her that she is to appear before Parliament, which she realises will mean her death. Arturo privately asks Giorgio about the prisoner. [14] As the latter leaves, together with Elvira and her attendants, and Valton with his guards goes to prepare for Enrichetta's arraignment, she addresses Arturo, who has lingered behind, seeking his help and revealing her identity as the captive Queen. He promises to help her. [15] Elvira enters, dressed for her wedding, wearing a garland of roses and carrying the fine bridal veil that Arturo has given her. She seeks Enrichetta's help in wearing it, before leaving with Giorgio and her attendants. [16] Once they have gone, Arturo realises the possible use of the veil as a means of disguise and escape for the Queen. [17] At this moment Riccardo appears, with drawn sword, determined to seize the supposed Elvira. The two men are about to fight, when the Queen draws aside her veil, showing Riccardo that she is not Elvira. He recognises the prisoner, but allows

them to pass. ¹⁸ Elvira returns, with her uncle and father, and others, to find Arturo and the prisoner gone, bringing hue and cry after them. ¹⁹ Elvira is now out of her mind, and raves in her madness, calling on Arturo, to the pity of the onlookers. ²⁰ She seems to see him running from her, while the others lament her fate and vow revenge.

CD 2

Act II

¹ In another part of the fortress people express their pity for Elvira. ² Giorgio appears, and they ask what news he has. ³ He describes the scene of Elvira's madness, again exciting their pity, and anger at Arturo's treachery. ⁴ Riccardo enters, with a document condemning Arturo, vowing revenge on him. ⁵ Elvira, meanwhile, is heard continuing her lament, calling only for death, overheard by Riccardo and Giorgio. ⁶ She enters, recalling Arturo's promises, and not recognising the two men. She imagines she is with Arturo, ⁷ calling on him to hurry to her. ⁸ Riccardo vows revenge, while Giorgio tells him that the death of Arturo will bring about the death of Elvira. ⁹ He will be haunted by Elvira's ghost. ¹⁰ Giorgio is convinced by Riccardo's reply, and the two agree to join together in vengeance. ¹¹ Let the trumpets sound, calling them to arms to fight with Arturo and avenge Elvira.

Act III

¹² In a garden near the fortress a storm is breaking. Arturo rushes in, casting aside his cloak. Now he is safe, and declares again his loyalty to his country and his love. ¹³ He hears the voice of Elvira, singing his own song of a lovelorn troubadour. He calls out to her, and when there is no answer, he sings the same song himself. ¹⁴ He hears people approaching, dons his cloak and hides. His pursuers declare their intentions, but do not see Arturo. ¹⁵ Once they are gone, he emerges from hiding, but is in doubt what to do. He sings again his song. ¹⁶ Now Elvira hears him. To her amazement she sees Arturo, who kneels before her. ¹⁷ She asks how long they have been apart, three months that have seemed to her three centuries, in which she called out for him. He seeks her forgiveness. ¹⁸ He would embrace her, and she can find no words to express her joy. Drums are heard, and Elvira's demeanour changes, to Arturo's increasing alarm. He understands that his enemies are approaching, while she welcomes the sound as for their wedding. ¹⁹ His pursuers draw near, and she clasps his knees, calling on them for help, in case Arturo escapes from her again. Arturo is surrounded, and Elvira's mood changes once more, when she hears his death pronounced. ²⁰ Arturo is moved by Elvira's plight. Under the threats of the Puritans, he tells them to desist, and have some pity for Elvira. ²¹ At this moment the sound of heralds is heard. A message is given to Giorgio and Riccardo, who announce, with joy, the defeat of the Stuarts and the freedom of the country, with the pardoning of all prisoners, an event that brings Elvira to her senses once more, so that the lovers can be together.

Keith Anderson

Compatible with existing CD players, this SACD contains three separate versions of the same programme: 5.1 multichannel surround sound mastered in DSD • 2-channel stereo mastered in DSD • CD standard stereo

Holst achieved the first real success of his career with *The Planets*, which received its first public performance in 1919. It is a remarkably effective work, brilliantly scored for the orchestra, with the character of each of the seven movements suggested by the astrological properties given to the various planets of the solar system.

**Gustav
HOLST**
(1874-1934)

The Planets

50:00

- | | | |
|----------|--|-------------|
| 1 | Mars, The Bringer of War | 7:03 |
| 2 | Venus, The Bringer of Peace | 8:31 |
| 3 | Mercury, The Winged Messenger | 3:59 |
| 4 | Jupiter, The Bringer of Jollity | 8:00 |
| 5 | Saturn, The Bringer of Old Age | 9:21 |
| 6 | Uranus, The Magician | 6:12 |
| 7 | Neptune, The Mystic | 6:53 |

- | | | |
|----------|--|--------------|
| 8 | The Mystic Trumpeter, Op. 18 | |
| | Scena for Soprano and Orchestra * | 18:52 |
| | (ed. Colin Matthews & Imogen Holst) | |

*** Claire Rutter, Soprano • Ladies of RSNO Chorus
Royal Scottish National Orchestra • David Lloyd-Jones**

Recorded 17th - 18th February 2001 in the City Halls, Glasgow
 Producer: Andrew Walton (K&A Productions Ltd.) • Engineer: Eleanor Thomason • Assistant Engineer: Peter Newble
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