

Verdi

LA FORZA DEL DESTINO

Milanov • Del Monaco • Warren
Herbert • New Orleans • 1953





LA FORZA DEL DESTINO

Opera in Three Acts* by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave (additional text by Antonio Ghislanzoni)

Performance of March 14, 1953 (Acts I & II)

Performance March 12, 1953 (Act III)

CD 1 (??:??)

Act I, Scene 1: The Marquis of Calatrava's Palace

1. Buona notte, mia figlia
2. Temea restasse qui... Me, pellegrina ed orfana
3. M'aiuti, signorina... Ah! per sempre
4. Sinfonia (Overture)

Act I, Scene 2: Monastery of Our Lady of the Angels

5. Son giunta!... Madre, pietosa Vergine
6. Chi siete?...
7. Chi mi cerca?
8. È fermo il voto?
9. Il santo nome di Dio Signore
10. La vergine degli angeli

Act II, Scene 1: Army quarters near a battlefield

11. Attenti al gioco, attenti
12. La vita è inferno all'infelice
13. Oh, tu che in seno agl'angeli
14. Al tradimento!
15. Amici in vita e in morte
16. Portan qui ferito il Capitano

CD 2 (??:??)

Act II, Scene 1 (continued)

1. Solenne in quest'ora
2. Morir! Tremenda cosa!
3. Urna fatale del mio destino
4. E s'altra prova rinvenir potessi?
5. È salvo! Oh gioia!

Act II, Scene 2: Military camp, several weeks later

6. Compagni, sostiamo
7. Ne gustare m'è dato
8. Sleale! Il segreto
9. Viva la guerra!
10. Al suon del tamburo
11. Toh! Toh! Poffare il mondo!
12. Lasciatelo chi'ei vada... Rataplan!

Act III, Scene 1: Interior of the Monastery

13. Fate la carità
14. Auf! Pazienza non v'ha che basti!
15. Giunge qualcuno, aprite
16. Invano Alvaro ti celasti al mondo
17. Le minaccie, i fieri accenti

Act III, Scene 2: Hermitage near the Monastery

18. Pace, pace, mio Dio
19. Io muoio! Confessione!
20. Non imprecare





CD 3 BONUS TRACKS (??:??)

Scenes from Acts I & II (March 12, 1953)

Act I, Scene 1

1. Buona notte, ma figlia
2. Temea restasse qui... Me, pellegrina ed orfana
3. M'aiuti, signorina... Ah! per sempre

Act I, Scene 2

4. Son giunta!... Madre, pietosa Vergine
5. Chi siete?...
6. Chi mi cerca?
7. È fermo il voto?
8. La vergine degli angeli

Act II, Scene 1

9. La vita è inferno all'infelice
10. Oh, tu che in seno agl'angeli
11. Al tradimento!
12. Amici in vita e in morte
13. Piano... qui posi
14. Solenne in quest'ora

Act II, Scene 2

15. Ne gustare m'è dato
16. Sleale! Il segreto

*Note: Though La Forza del Destino was composed as a four-act opera, the tracking on this CD follows the act and scene divisions as performed in this production.

Leonora: ZINKA MILANOV

Don Alvaro: MARIO DEL MONACO

Don Carlo: LEONARD WARREN

Padre Guardiano: WILLIAM WILDERMAN

Preziosilla: CLARAMAE TURNER

Marquis of Calatrava: NORMAN TREIGLE

Fra Melitone: GERHARD PECHNER

Curra: ROSEMARY ROTOLO

A Surgeon: DONALD BERNARD

A Begger Woman: LYDIA NEUMANN

Orchestra and Chorus of the New Orleans Opera

WALTER HERBERT, conductor




Verdi composed *La Forza del Destino* for the Imperial Theatre at St. Petersburg, Russia, where it had its premiere on November 10, 1862. The stellar cast was led by the great tenor Enrico Tamberlick (Don Alvaro), Caroline Douvry-Barbot (Leonora), Francisco Graziani (Don Carlo), Gian-Francesco Angelini (Padre Guardiano), Constance Nantier-Didiée (Preziosilla), and Achille De Bassini (Fra Melitone). During the 1845/46 season the young Caroline Douvry had sung in New Orleans at the Théâtre d'Orléans. De Bassini earlier had created roles in three Verdi operas, Seid in *Il Corsaro*, Doge Francesco Foscarei in *I Due Foscari*, and Miller in Luisa Miller. Also in the premiere cast, in the small role of the Alcade, was Ignacio Marini, Verdi's first Attila. It was this initial version of *La Forza del Destino* that was heard in this country for the first time a little over two years later, on February 24, 1865, at New York's Academy of Music.

Following the opera's world premiere in 1862, however, and subsequent stagings in Madrid and in various Italian theatres, Verdi spent several years considering revisions to the work, making alterations


to various musical pieces, substituting the present ethereal final trio for the violent suicide of Don Alvaro that had ended the first version, and replacing the original prelude with the grand overture that has become a standard concert excerpt for symphony orchestras.

The revised version of *Forza* was first staged at La Scala, Milan, on February 27, 1869 when the principal roles were taken by Teresa Stolz (Leonora), Mario Tiburini (Don Alvaro), Luigi Colonnese (Don Carlo), and Marcel Junca (Padre Guardiano). Tiburini sang Alfredo in *La Traviata* and the Duke in *Rigoletto* when those operas were first played in New Orleans in 1857, and Marcel Junca had been a member of the Théâtre d'Orléans troupe in seasons 1855/56 through 1857/58.

While *La Forza del Destino* was heard from time to time in this country following its first New York staging in 1865, it never achieved the widespread popularity of other Verdi scores. When finally it entered the repertoire at the Metropolitan Opera House, on November 15, 1918, it was something of a novelty, not having been staged in New York since the early




1880s. The legendary cast of that Met premiere included Rosa Ponselle, making her Metropolitan and operatic career debut as Leonora, Enrico Caruso (Don Alvaro), Giuseppe de Luca (Don Carlo) and José Mardones (Padre Guardiano). Thereafter the opera was heard with increasing frequency in Met seasons until the early 1940s.




The French Opera House in New Orleans did not stage *Forza* in the seasons prior to that theatre's burning in 1919. But the opera was in the repertoire of Fortune Gallo's touring San Carlo troupe, and it was Gallo's company that introduced the score to the Crescent City on December 15, 1920, at the Jerusalem Temple. In subsequent visits during that decade *Forza* was heard on a number of occasions. Bettina Freeman (1920), Bianca Saroya (1925; 1926), and Clara Jacobo (1927) were among the sopranos who sang Leonora, while the most noted exponent of Don Alvaro was the Costa Rican tenor Manuel Salazar (1924; 1925). But in the following decade *Forza* was no longer featured in Gallo's continued visits to New Orleans, and the score languished.

Popular French and Italian operas comprised the repertoire during the early years of the New Orleans Opera Association which was established in 1943. But in its 10th season conductor Walter Herbert scheduled a revival of *Forza* for the 1952/53 season. The opera had been revived as well at the Metropolitan and served as opening night for Rudolf Bing's 3rd New York season on November 10, 1952.



As with the 1952 Met revival, the New Orleans performance omitted the Inn Scene (Act II, Scene 1), and the overture followed the first act. Zinka Milanov (Leonora), Leonard Warren (Don Carlo), and Gerhard Pechner (Fra Melitone) repeated their New York roles. Mario del Monaco made his New Orleans debut as Don Alvaro; the excellent basso William Wildermann sang Padre Guardiano; Preziosilla was assigned to Claramae Turner; and a young New Orleans basso, Norman Treigle, then still singing supporting roles with the company, was heard as the Marchese di Calatrava.

This combination of artists provided the New Orleans Opera Association with



one of its most memorable performances. At this juncture, now 52 years later, I clearly remember the frisson caused by del Monaco's singing as he bounded onto the stage in Act I, his voice trumpet-like. Unfortunately, this was to be the tenor's only New Orleans appearance.

Leonora di Vargas was one of Milanov's signature roles, one that she sang 37 times at the Met. Here her singing is caught at its most beautiful, the voice focused and supported, and her trademark pianissimi a thing of wonder. In later seasons Milanov would return to New Orleans as Gioconda, in 1953 and 1960, and finally as Santuzza in 1963.

Generally recognized as the finest Verdi dramatic baritone of his era, Leonard Warren also is caught at the peak of his vocal powers. His free and easy top register and the sheer size of his voice make him an ideal Don Carlo. Sadly it was during a performance of Forza in 1960 that Warren was stricken and died on-stage at the Met. Warren's other operatic appearances in New Orleans included, on Met tours, Valentin (1940) and Alfio (1941), and with the New Orleans Opera

Association, Rigoletto (1951), Falstaff (1956), and Conte di Luna (1958).

It is a pleasure to be able to revisit this legendary production of one of Verdi's most beautiful scores, now available in greatly improved sound thanks to newly discovered source material.

Jack Belsom

Archivist

New Orleans Opera Association

December 2005



La forza del destino
in New Orleans 1953

Zinka Milanov sang her first Leonora in *La forza del destino* on 9 January 1943, in a Metropolitan Opera revival that also featured Kurt Baum, Lawrence Tibbett, Ezio Pinza and Salvatore Bacaloni under the baton of Bruno Walter. (Some years later Milanov and Pinza appeared together in a portion of the Convent Scene on “The RCA Victor Show Starring Ezio Pinza.” A kinescope of that 28 December 1951 NBC telecast rests among the holdings of the Library of Congress.) The Metropolitan Opera performances placed the Overture (*Sinfonia*) between the first scene and the Inn Scene. At the time of a new production at the Metropolitan on opening night 1952 (November 10), with Milanov, Richard Tucker, Leonard Warren, Cesare Siepi and Gerhard Pechner under Fritz Stiedry, the Overture was again placed after the opening scene in the Calatrava Palace, but this time the Inn Scene was omitted and the performance proceeded directly to the Convent Scene instead.

In its performances on 12 and 14 March 1953, under the baton of Walter Herbert,

the New Orleans Opera House Association followed suit, as presented on this CD set. Three of the artists from the Metropolitan opening night – Milanov, Warren and Pechner – along with Mario Del Monaco, who had sung Don Alvaro in the fourth performance of the New York revival (4 December 1952), journeyed to New Orleans for its production. While a recording of the Metropolitan Opera broadcast of 29 November 1952 preserves Milanov, Tucker, Warren and Pechner in their opening night roles, the New Orleans performances provide the only recorded documentation of Milanov, Del Monaco and Warren together in *Forza*. This illustrious trio performed as an ensemble for a total of only three performances of the opera, the one other having been at the Metropolitan on 10 December 1952.

For the New Orleans evenings, *Forza* was telescoped into three acts, each with two scenes, as shown in this booklet. The roles of Leonora, Don Alvaro and Don Carlo are substantially complete. Except for the Inn Scene, all of Leonora’s music is present. Aside from Don Carlo’s appearance in the Inn Scene, the parts of Don Alvaro and Don Carlo are presented with

only minor omissions, such as standard performance cuts of a few bars in Carlo's cabaletta "Ah! Egli è salvo!" and a page in the "Sleale!" duet. Preziosilla's "Al suon del tamburo" has been transposed from the Inn Scene to Act II, scene 2. The role of the peddler Trabuco has disappeared completely.

Tape recordings were made in-house on high-fidelity equipment during the two 1953 New Orleans performances of Forza. Those unofficial recordings have enjoyed a curious history, including private circulation on open-reel and cassette tapes, issuance of one long-playing set and several incarnations on compact discs, all in varying quality of sound. WTIX, a local New Orleans AM radio station, broadcast Acts I and II on the evening of 14 March but did not transmit Act III because of lack of radio time. Local legend has it that the then extant master tapes were "borrowed" and dubbings of selected portions of those, perhaps with some of the WTIX material, were surreptitiously sent to a New York City area record producer. The opera was issued privately in a limited edition of three long-playing discs that turned out to be a compilation

of the two New Orleans performances with part of a Met broadcast spliced in. Since the advent of the compact disc, several issues have been published with notations that they contain the complete performance of 12 March. The original in-house master tapes cannot currently be located. On none of the previous Forza issues is the sound entirely satisfactory. Some obviously have been copied from sources many generations removed from the originals and treated with debilitating sound "enhancements."

For this edition, VAI has located high quality portions of both evenings, most likely dubbed from the original masters. With these newly discovered sources combined, we now have the most vivid and satisfying issue of this legendary production.

George Shelby Weaver

Author of *A ZINKA MILANOV PHONOGRAPHY*, which is scheduled to appear in *ZINKA*, Bruce Burroughs' forthcoming biography of the singer.