

Verdi

Azira - Da Gusman, su fragli barca...Nell'astro che plu fulgido. **Aroldo** - Ah! Dagli scanni eterel...Ah, dal sen di quella tomba. **Attila** - Allor che i forti corrono...Da te questo or m'e concesso. **La Battaglia di Legnano** - Quante volte come un dono...A frenarti, o cor nel petto. **I due Foscari** - Tu al cul sguardo onnipossente...O patrizi, tremate. **Ernani** - Ernani, Involami...Tutto sprezzo che d'Ernani. **I Lombardi alla prima Crociata** - Se vano é il pregare...I vinti sorgono. **Macbeth** - Si colmi il calice. **I masnadieri** - Tu del mio Carlo al seno... Carlo vive?. **I vespri siciliani** - Mercé, dilette amiche. **Giovanna d'Arco** - Sempre all'alba ed alla sera. **Un giorno di regno** - Non san quant' lo nel petto... Non vo' quel vecchio

Lucia Aliberti sop Milan Giuseppe Verdi Chorus and Symphony Orchestra / Oleg Caetani
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Early Verdi arias from the Sicilian dramatic soprano

Though Verdi's creative lifetime is one of the great artistic arcs in opera, his unmistakable voice was there from the beginning, even in seldom-heard early works where he ran down some fascinating blind alleys, such as putting a miniature violin concerto into *I Lombardi* or, in this collection's Act 2 excerpts from *Aroldo*, building an aria around a complex ostinato played by a delicate string consort.

Though Riccardo Muti seeks out every possible detail in his early Verdi performances, the less-affected performers here simply tap the lyrical power of the vocal writing. With a *legato* line unblemished by aspirating, the seasoned Bellini specialist Lucia Aliberti is exactly the right soprano to do so in a well-chosen collection of arias that welcomes the filigree purity of her voice but doesn't lead the ear to expect the kind of truck-driver chest voice that *verismo* singers bring to Verdi.

With that comes such a strong sense of expressive integration that one can think Aliberti isn't taking some of the cadenzas – not true – because she delivers expressive elements and vocal fireworks as all of a piece. Often, young Verdi seemed to expect multiple vocal types within the same aria. Aliberti suggests he knew exactly what he was doing, seconded by Oleg Caetani's alert but non-interventionist conducting.

Comparisons with Joan Sutherland's early Verdi recordings aren't fair – to Sutherland, who seemed pushed to her limits. Aliberti occasionally shows strain on high notes or when she attempts more chest voice than she can command. Nevertheless, she adapts well to Lady Macbeth's 'Si colmi il calice' – a lighter moment in a chesty role. When Maria Callas was asked to switch from light to heavy roles on short order, she claimed her voice wasn't an elevator that goes up and down. But I think that Aliberti's might be. **David Patrick Stearns**