

Maria Callas - Biography

Maria Anna Cecilia Sofia Kalogeropoulos, better known in the art world as Maria Callas, was born to Greek parents in New York on December 4, 1923. At the age of 13, she moved with her family to Greece, where she began studying voice with M. Trivella, and later studied at the Athens Conservatory with famous coloratura soprano E. de Hidalgo. According to some sources, she made her debut as Santuzza when she was barely fifteen years old, in a private performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana*; her official debut took place in 1940 at the Royal Theater in Athens, in Franz Suppé's operetta *Boccaccio*. She participated in subsequent seasons of the Athenian theater, where she interpreted greatly demanding roles such as Tosca (1942), Santuzza and, remarkably, Leonora in Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1944). In 1945, at the end of World War II, she returned with her family to the United States, where she was discovered by Giovanni Zenatello, a famous tenor from the turn of the century and founder of the summer opera festival at the Arena di Verona. Zenatello engaged her for the 1947 Season at Verona as the protagonist in *La Gioconda*. Her Italian debut took place on August 2, under conductor Tullio Serafin, who immediately realized the uncommon qualities of Callas and began with her an artistic partnership destined to play an extremely important role in the technical and interpretative evolution of the young soprano.

In the following years, Callas sang the dramatic repertoire in various Italian theaters: among the roles of those days are Aida, Leonora (*La Forza del Destino*), Turandot, and even Isolde and Kundry (*Parsifal*). On November 30, 1948, upon Serafin's request, Callas performed for the first time at the Teatro Comunale in Florence the part that would become her signature role: Norma. In 1949, she reached a second milestone in her career. While interpreting the role of Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre*, again under Serafin, she was asked by the conductor to substitute an indisposed colleague singing Elvira in *Puritani*. In spite of having only three days to learn the part, and the enormous technical and stylistic differences with respect to the repertoire that she had sung up to that moment, Callas had great success, proving to be capable of facing the soprano coloratura roles. The year 1949 was also crucial in her private life: that year, Callas married G.B. Meneghini, a businessman from Verona. That same year she sang her first *Norma* in the American continent at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, one of the world's premier opera houses at the time.

In the following years, Callas abandoned the most conspicuously dramatic roles, particularly Wagnerian, concentrated, above all, on the Italian operas of the early nineteen hundred. On April 12, 1950, she made her debut at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan as Aida, without causing much enthusiasm. In October she sang the role of Fiorilla in the revival of *Il Turco in Italia* by Rossini, at the Teatro Eliseo in Rome. The 1951-52 season marked her consolidation: Callas appeared in *I vespri siciliani*, *Norma*, and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, decisively conquering and beginning a series of triumphs that would follow one another uninterrupted throughout the decade. Other meaningful events that took place in 1952 include the first modern production of Rossini's *Music臺 Fiorentino* and her sensational debut at London's Covent Garden (on November 8) as a young and still unknown Joan Sutherland as Clotilde.

Callas broadened her repertory thereupon to include operas which, for technical or other reasons, had been excluded from her repertory in spite of their historic and artistic importance: following the aforementioned *Norma*, she turned her attention once again in Florence to the title role of *Medea* by Cherubini, which she performed later in diverse productions expressly conceived for her. She later sang *Werther* by Spontini, *Anna Bolena* and *Rolando* by Donizetti, as well as Imogene in the so-called "dramatic coloratura" soprano, as defined in the nineteen hundred. Her career as a diva incarnation. Evidently, she did not neglect the roles of the standard soprano, such as Amina (*L'Amour des trois oranges*) or Lucia di Lammermoor. Her personal and unprecedented dramatic depth, stand roles such as Macbeth in Verdi's *Macbeth*, the latter was thereafter triumphant. Thanks to Callas and the conducting of the great Victor de Sabata, she sang *Sonambula* (1955, under conductor Leonard Bernstein). In the following year.

On November 1st, 1954, Callas made her U.S. debut. Two years later, on October 22, 1956. She sang that very same role. That evening, she gave successive appearances during the same program. Rudolf Bing, was nonetheless disappointed by her. He had prior to her (and before the performances with Bing and the others) presented her to the public. She showed her up clearly in several concert performances beyond a shadow of a doubt. C.



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fff

ta . i... *con grande sentimento*

poco rall. *dolcississimo con grande sentimento* *Sem . pre con fe' sin .*

pp

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Vissi d'arte

*Direttore Victor De Sabata
Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala di Milano
Anno di registrazione 1953*

- 3 Metronomo base: $\text{♩} = 60-65$.
 4 Portamento *si bem.³ – la bem.³* (“d’arte”).
 5 Portamento *re bem.³ – si bem.³* (“vissi d’amore”); piccolo accento sul *si bem.³* (“d’amore”).
 6 Portamento *si bem.³ – la bem.³* (“amore”) e *diminuendo*.
 7 Accento sul terzo *si bem.³* (“mai”).
 8 Piccoli appoggi sulla seconda terzina (“anima”) (cfr. accompagnamento).
 10 *poco più mosso, crescendo*.
 11 Portamento *si bem.³ – la bem.³* (“furtiva”).
 13 *diminuendo* sulla seconda metà battuta (“conobbi, aiutai”), che asseconda la scomparsa dei trattini sulle note e la legatura; *molto rallentando*.
 15 Metronomo: $\text{♩} = 50-55$.
 19 Fiato dopo “preghiera”; *poco rallentando e diminuendo* sulle ultime due crome (“tabernacoli”).
 20 *Crescendo* sul primo *do⁴* (“sali”), poi *mf*.
 22 Portamenti: *mi bem.⁴ – fa⁴* (“diedi”), *sol⁴ – mi bem.⁴* (“fiori”); fiato dopo “fiori”, con anticipazione della sillaba “-ri” sul precedente *mib⁴*; portamento *fa⁴ – re⁴* (“agli”); *molto rallentando* sulla seconda metà battuta.
 23 Ultima croma *mf marcato*.
 24 Ancora *mf marcato*, soprattutto le crome di terzina; *p dolce* sull’ultima croma della battuta (“perché”).
 25 Portamento *fa⁴ – do⁴* (“perché, perché”); piccolo accento sul terzo *do⁴* (“Signore”).
 26 Leggero portamento *mi bem.⁴ – si bem.⁴* (“perché”); *rallentando* sulla seconda metà battuta; fiato prima dell’ultimo *mi bem.³* (“così”), *sostenuto*.
 27 *molto diminuendo*, fino a estinzione del suono.
 28 Piccolo accento sull’ultima croma (“gioielli”).
 29 Fiato dopo “gioielli”.
 30 Subito *mf* dopo la pausa.
 32 *Rubato* sulla quartina di semicrome (*allargando* le prime tre, più breve l’ultima).
 33 *Rubato* sulla quartina di semicrome e *crescendo*; portamento *re⁴ – si bem.³* (“dolor”);* ampio portamento *si bem.³ – mi bem.⁴* (“perché”).
 34 Portamenti: *sol⁴ – mi bem.⁴* (“perché”), *fa⁴ – re⁴* (“Signor”).
 35 *diminuendo* verso la conclusione del *la⁴*, con breve portamento al successivo *sol⁴* (“Ah”).
 36 Piccolo accento sul *sol⁴* come conclusione del portamento, *molto diminuendo* e corona; separazione tra “perché” e “me ne rimunerò”, ottenuta con un breve prolungamento del *la bem.³* (“perché”); piccolo accento sul *si bem.³* (“me”); raddoppio della “m” in “rimunerò”, portando la voce verso il *fa⁴*; portamento *fa⁴ – mi bem.⁴* (“rimunerò”); *sostenuto* il *re⁴* e portamento *re⁴ – mi bem.⁴* (“così”).

Vissi d’arte

*Victor De Sabata, conductor
Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala di Milano
Recorded 1953*

- 3 Metronome: $\text{♩} = 60-65$
 4 *Portamento b flat¹ – a flat¹* (“d’arte”).
 5 *Portamento d flat¹ – b flat¹* (“vissi d’amore”); small accent on the *b flat¹* (“d’amore”).
 6 *Portamento b flat¹ – a flat¹* (“amore”) and *diminuendo*.
 7 Accent on the third *b flat¹* (“mai”).
 8 Small *appoggi* on the second triplet (“anima”) (contrast with the accompaniment).
 10 *Poco più mosso, crescendo*.
 11 *Portamento b flat¹ – a flat¹* (“furtiva”).
 13 *Diminuendo* on the second half of the measure (“conobbi, aiutai”), that follows the disappearance of the *tenutti* over the note and the *legatura*; *molto rallentando*.
 15 Metronome: $\text{♩} = 50-55$.
 19 Breath after “preghiera”; *poco rallentando and diminuendo* on the last two eight notes (“tabernacoli”).
 20 *Crescendo* on the first *c¹* (“sali”), *mf* afterwards.
 22 Portamenti: *e flat¹ – f¹* (“diedi”), *g¹ – e flat¹* (“fiori”); breath after “fiori”, anticipating the syllable “-ri” on the preceding *e flat¹*; *portamento f¹ – d¹* (“agli altar”). *Molto rallentando* on the second half of the measure.
 23 Last eight note *mf marcato*.
 24 Still *mf marcato*, particularly on the triplet eight notes; *p dolce* on the last eight note of the measure (“perché”).
 25 Portamento *f¹ – c¹* (“perché, perché”); small accent on the third *c¹* (“Signore”).
 26 Slight *portamento e flat¹ – b flat¹* (“perché”); *rallentando* on the second half of the measure; breath before the last *e flat¹* (“così”), *sostenuto*.
 27 *molto diminuendo* until the sound has completely disappeared.
 28 Small accent on the last eight note (“gioielli”).
 29 Breath after “gioielli”.
 30 *mf subito* after the pause.
 32 *Rubato* on the group of four sixteenth notes (*allargando* the first three, the last one shorter).
 33 *Rubato* on the group of four sixteenth notes and *crescendo*; *portamento d¹ – b flat¹* (“dolor”),* as suggested by the small slur on the score; wide *portamento b flat¹ – e flat¹* (“perché”).
 34 Portamenti: *g¹ – e flat¹* (“perché”), *f¹ – d¹* (“Signor”).
 35 *diminuendo* towards the end of *a¹*, with a brief *portamento* towards the following *g¹* (“Ah”).
 36 Small accent on *g¹* as a conclusion to the *portamento*, *molto diminuendo* and fermata; separation between “perché” and “me ne rimunerò”, accomplished through a small prolongation of the *b flat¹* (“perché”); small accent on the *b flat¹* (“me”); doubling of the “m” in “rimunerò”, doing a *portamento* towards *f¹*; *portamento f¹ – e flat¹* (“rimunerò”); the *d¹ sostenuto* and *portamento d¹ – e flat¹* (“così”)

* Questa sembra la più plausibile interpretazione della piccola legatura supplementare nello spartito.

* This seems to be the most plausible interpretation of the small additional slurs in the score.