



MARIA CALLAS

THE IMMORTAL HEROINE

BY CARLA ZANIN

VIRTUAL STAGE ORCHESTRA

Conductor Federico Bardazzi

Carla Zanin Stage Director, Video

Marianthi Kiriou Actress

Danae Eleni Soprano

Despina Anagnou Soprano

Aneta Witosz Soprano

Leonardo De Lisi Tenor

Philip Dennis Modinos Tenor

Dimosthenis Stavrianos Baritone

24 OCTOBER 2023, 13.00

National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens
Music Department

25 OCTOBER 2023, 20.30

Iraklion Multispace Athens

29 OCTOBER 2023, 20.30

Agia Paraskevi Athens



FREE ENTRANCE



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CAPHE-Communities and Artistic Participation in Hybrid Environment
European Union Program Horizon Action Marie Curie

Conservatorio Statale di Musica Giacomo Puccini La Spezia Italy
Opera Network Firenze Italy
NKUA-National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
PUNO-Polish University Abroad

in collaboration with
Accademia Europea di Firenze Italy
Ensemble San Felice Italy
Hellenic Opera Corporation

Performance

Tuesday 24 October 2023, 13.00

NKUA-National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Music Department

Wednesday 25 October 2023, 20.30

Iraklion Multispace Athens

Sunday 29 October 2023, 20.30

Athens Agia Paraskevi Athens

Scan for the program



Maria Callas
the immortal heroine
by Carla Zanin

Virtual Stage Orchestra
Conductor Federico Bardazzi

Stage Director, Video Carla Zanin

Video Technologies Team Fabrizio Casti, David Tozzi

Sound Engineer Guido Paolo Longo

Video projection Mike Parchimowicz

Make-up and hairstyle Giulia Winter

Iconic image Summer Emma Bertagna

Graphics Daniela Caffaratto

Jason Costume a cooperation between Al and Kalina Kulenko

All other costumes Vestiario Athens

Recorded voices Marianthi Kyriou, Vasiliki Deliou

Translation from Italian to Greek Philip Dennis Modinos

Marianthi Kiriou Actress

Danae Eleni Soprano

Despina Anagnou Soprano

Aneta Witosz Soprano

Leonardo De Lisi Tenor

Philip Dennis Modinos Tenor

Dimosthenis Christos Stavrianos Baritone

Virtual Stage Orchestra

Debora Tempestini violins I, II

Andrea Nicoli altos, cellos

Lavinia Camarin Doublebasses

Paolo Gonnelli Flutes, Oboes

Andrea Bareggi Clarinets, Bassoons

Michele Augelli Horns

Dimitri Betti Harp, Trombones

Guido Paolo Longo Trumpets, Drums

Leonardo De Lisi Drums, Harp, Bells

Aneta Witosz drums, bass clarinets, acoustic clarinet

This new production of theatre and music is not only for opera lovers and music enthusiasts but for those who madly love Maria.

This groundbreaking show would like to offer a special perspective on the life and legacy of the legendary soprano Maria Callas. The theatrical performance, a passionate and intimate dialogue with the spectators, is strongly intertwined with the sumptuous musical part, with opera pieces perfectly describing the feelings, gentle and powerful, of the Divine. The great actress **Marianthi Kyriou** will be Maria's body and soul while three sopranos will give voice and interpretation to Maria's most beloved characters, with the talented **Danae Eleni**, the young promise **Despina Anagnou** and **Aneta Witosz** from Poland in an anthology of solos, duets and ensembles, with the talented tenors **Leonardo De Lisi** and **Philip Dennis Modino** and the well-known talent the baritone **Dimosthenis Christos Stavrianos**, who will be conducted by **Federico Bardazzi's** baton with the innovative Virtual Stage Orchestra.

"Maria Callas, the Immortal Heroine" transports audiences into the captivating life of Maria Callas, exploring her multifaceted personality in a close comparison between her great career achievements and her personal life, all through the lens of breathtaking music and compelling storytelling. Starting from the many letters she wrote, the opera tells of her determination, her triumphs and at the same time whispers her childhood dreams, her passions, her hopes.

The musical program is meticulously crafted keeping in mind the close relation between Maria's profound woman sensitivity, her incredible career and her true life, trying to recreate some of her most iconic performances. The opera is composed of 7 sections where acting and music interlace in a continuous flow, in the alternation of the spoken word and the sung word.

What sets "Maria Callas, the Immortal Heroine" apart is the innovative use of technology applied to an opera. The Virtual Stage Orchestra, an innovative concept, seamlessly integrates live performers and immersive audio and visual solutions, creating stunning experience.

"We believe that Maria Callas's story deserves to be told in a way that reflects the grandeur of her artistic talent and the wonderful complexity of her unique personality. 'Maria Callas, the Immortal Heroine' is not just a show; it is a tribute to a myth, to an eternal Heroine who not only changed the world of opera forever - continuing to inspire new generations and captivate audiences worldwide - but she still represents the emblem of "style" as absolute value" said **Carla Zanin**, play writer and stage director behind the production.

This event is part of the activities of the European research project "Horizon Action Marie Curie" CAPHE (Communities and Artistic Participation in Hybrid Environment) a four-year multidisciplinary research on the impact of the digital transition and virtual reality on communities and on aesthetics and artistic languages, with a partnership of 10 among universities, companies and NGO from Poland, Italy, Greece, Portugal, England, Kenya. A large group, around 40 people, meets in Athens for a multidisciplinary collaboration: musicians, artists, VR and video mapping experts, music and art students, institutions and universities such as Music Conservatory Puccini La Spezia, Opera Network Florence, Music Conservatory of Venice, Ensemble San Felice Firenze, Accademia Europea Florence, Virtual Stage Orchestra, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Hellenic Opera Corporation, Faculty of fine arts University of Lisbon-Portugal, Polish University Abroad London (UK).

A special thanks to Hellenic Opera Corporation for the precious collaboration in site.

Let you transport in a poetic and musical journey into the world of one of the greatest women ever, **Maria Anna Cecilia Sofia Kalogeropoulos**.

Musical Program

1. **Giuseppe Verdi** *La traviata Ouverture*

1.1 **Pietro Mascagni** *Cavalleria rusticana Voi lo sapete o Mamma*

Danae Eleni

2. **Giacomo Puccini** *Gianni Schicchi O mio babbino caro*

Danae Eleni

2.1 **Vincenzo Bellini** *Norma Casta diva*

Danae Eleni

3. **George Bizet** *Carmen Ouverture*

3.1 *L'amour est un oiseau rebelle*

Danae Eleni

4. **Giuseppe Verdi** *Macbeth Nel dì della vittoria*

Despina Anagnou

5. **Giacomo Puccini** *Manon Lescaut Intermezzo*

5.1 **Giacomo Puccini** *La Bohème Mimi?!...Speravo di trovarvi qui*

Danae Eleni, Dimosthenis Christos Stavrianos

5.2 **Giacomo Puccini** *Tosca E lucevan le stelle*

Philip Dennis Modinos

6. **Giuseppe Verdi** *La traviata Sempre libera*
Despina Anagnou

7. **Luigi Cherubini** *Médée Finale*
Despina Anagnou *Medea*
Leonardo De Lisi *Jason*
Aneta Witosz, Danae Eleni *Soprano*
Philip Dennis Modinos *Tenor*
Dimosthenis Christos Stavrianos *Bass*

7.1 **Umberto Giordano** Andrea Chénier *La mamma morta*
recording by Maria Callas

Carla Zanin is an Italian opera director, artistic director of Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival, president of Opera Network Firenze, manager in Erasmus + projects, lecturer and researcher in E.U. Horizon project CAPHE, Communication, Marketing and Soft Digital Skills teacher. Thanks to her activity as cultural creative, she creates new concepts for the Digital Transition in the Musical Theater and Classical Music, including Virtual Stage, InMedia Stat Virtus and Metamorphoses which are funded by E.U. program Erasmus + KA for



Higher Education and Vocational Training, Meta Opera System, Hybrid Opera Performance funded by Italian Ministry of Culture; she conceives innovative projects “site specific” that combine music, poetry, theatre, dance, visual arts and VR / digital systems in an ideal excursus between Philology and Technology and integrating different cultures and traditions.

She carries out multi-transdisciplinary researches in the musical theatre, between Humanistic and Technology, physical/biological and digital spaces. The current research “VR impact on dramatic storytelling in Opera live performance – Emotional content / representation between physical and digital” focuses on the study and experimentation of the aesthetic effects of implementing virtual environments into live performances.

Federico Bardazzi is an orchestra and choir conductor, cellist, vielle player, viola da gamba player, producer of musical events, and director of international projects. He specializes in Baroque, medieval, and Gregorian music and has directed numerous operas and concerts worldwide, with a particular focus on premieres, rediscoveries, and transcriptions that he has undertaken himself.

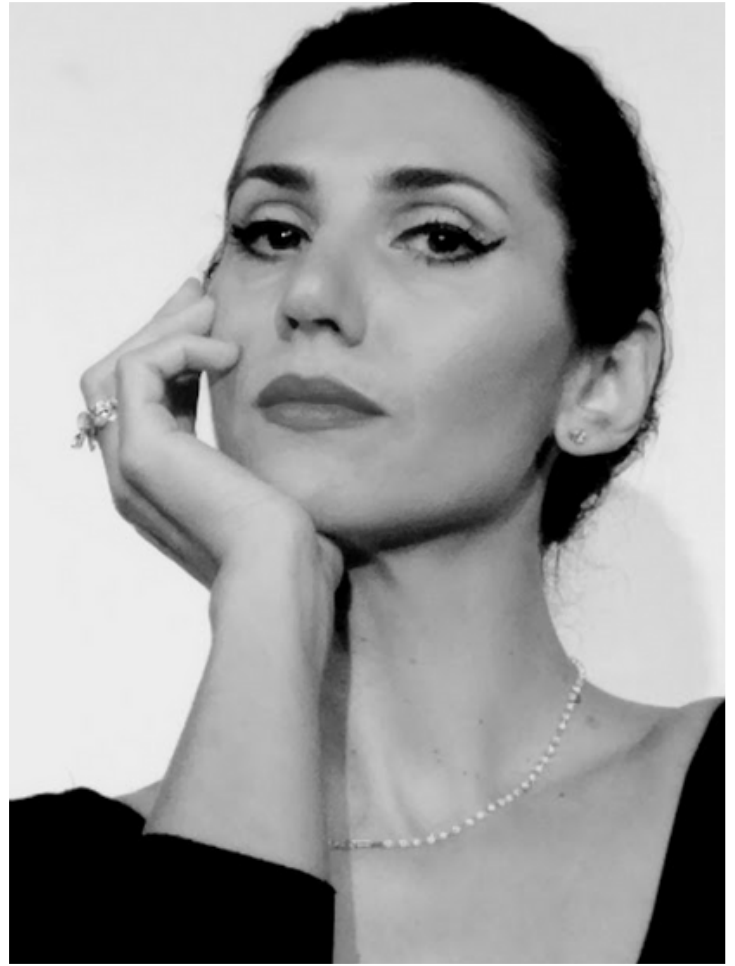
He began his career in 1975 as a choir director and organist at the Pieve di Giogoli and the Certosa di Firenze. In 1991, he founded Ensemble San Felice, a vocal and instrumental group that he still directs today,

with which he has organized numerous concerts, tours, and recordings. In 2008, he became the Director of Courses at Maggio Fiorentino Formazione. In 2012, he co-founded the Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival (FICF), which annually brings together hundreds of musicians from around the world in Florence. In 2015, he co-founded Opera Network, with which he has realized various productions, training projects funded by European funds, and international collaborations, particularly with universities and institutions in China.

Since 2020, following the pandemic, he has been the scientific coordinator and actively involved in several European projects focused on digital transition in the music sector, with a special emphasis on opera: Virtual Stage, In Media Stat Virtus, Metamorphoses, Let's Sing Opera, CAPHE-Communities and Artistic Participation in Hybrid Environment.



Marianthi Kiriou was born in Athens. She graduated from VEAKIS Drama School and from Athens University in Physical Education and Sports. She speaks Greek, English and Spanish. She educated in classical and modern dance (R.A.D.), and also Latin, Ballroom, jazz, taps, and Traditional dances. She studied music and voice with Yolanda Di Tasso. From 1999, she started playing lead and supporting roles in ancient Greek Drama, Comedy, Musical, Dance Theater, Cabaret show, Stand-Up comedy e.t.c. With ancient Drama she participated in festivals in Greece (Epidaurus / Herodium), and abroad (Berlin / Frankfurt / Vienna / Moscow / Merida / Kairo / Cyprus e.t.c.) As a performer she participated in the Opening Ceremony of World Athletics in Athens (1997), and in the Opening Ceremony of Eurovision Contest in Athens (2006). In Cinema she participated in short films and documentaries for BBC. In Television she acted in the TV series Stubbings. She also worked in dubbing documentaries and TV series. From 2011 she became part of the theatrical group viAthens, in which she has been working as an actress, choreographer and director. As a teacher in theatrical education, she has worked in national primary and elementary schools. She's also worked as an actors' body trainer and yoga teacher.



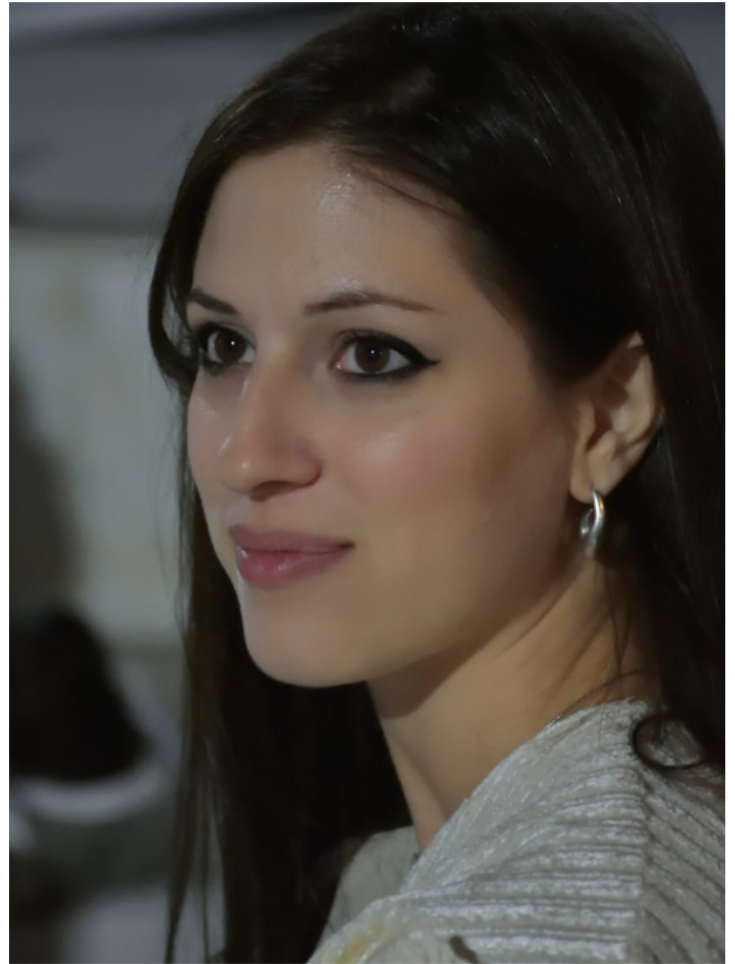
Danae Eleni After gaining critical acclaim this Summer for her role debut as Marienka in Smetana's "La fiancée vendue" at Opera de Baugé, conducted by Konstantinos Diminakis "A great lyric soprano with freshness, warmth and flexibility... a talented actress with the widest expressive palette" (forumopera.com), Greek-English soprano Danae Eleni is thrilled to be performing "at home" in Athens again. Danae was a winner of the 2022 Let's Sing Competition at Sofia Opera & Ballet, Bulgaria & Soprano Winner of the 2021 Concorso Musica Sacra in Rome.



She performed as the soprano soloist for their staged productions of Handel's Messiah in 2022 in Karditsa, Greece and at the Szleske-Divadlo Theatre, Czechia. Last season, Danae made role debuts as La Messaggiera Orfeo (conducted by Federico Bardazzi - Lyon, France); Contessa Almaviva Le nozze di Figaro (Marin Drzic Theatre - Dubrovnik, Croatia); Mimì La bohème (Jerash Festival - Jordan) and Pamina Czarodziejski Flet (Hala Koszyki - Warsaw, Poland). In 2023 Danae was the soprano soloist for world premieres of the cantata Μνήμex by Christos Samaras conducted by Nikos Efthimiadis at the Ancient Theatre of Philippi - Kavala, Greece; and Julian Cochran's Night Scenes. In concert, Danae made another role debut as Donna Elvira Don Giovanni with the Szeged Symphony Orchestra - Hungary; and performed in Florence, Corsica and throughout the UK raising money for Help Musicians Ukraine - which she co-founded in March 2022 - www.helpmusiciansukraine.com.

After finishing her studies at the Royal College of Music (London), and the University of Oxford, Danae is now based between Warsaw (Poland), London (UK) and Athens (Greece). www.danaeeleni.com

Despina Anagnou was born in Agrinion, Greece. She started singing lessons in 2017 with soprano Dina Goudioti at the Musical Horizons Conservatory and received her diploma in Classical Singing in February 2022 with distinction and the first prize. Despina has also completed a bachelor's degree in Obstetrics from the University of West Attica. Despina has attended several seminars and mastreclasses with important singers and musicians such as Dimitris Platanias, Agathagellos Georgakatos, Antony Koroneos, Ivan Anguelov,



Don Marrazzo, Vangelis Angelakis and others. Despina sang the role of "Kiki" in the Greek operetta "Vaftistikos" by Theofrastos Sakellaridis in July 2023 in Megaron of Doukissis Plakentias under the direction of the conductor Orestis Zafeiropoulos. Despina has participated in concerts in Greece, one of the most recent being in honour of Maria Callas in Agia Varvara and also in Germany in the "Opera Academy Artist Communication 2021" program. As part of the choir of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Despina has also participated in the operas "AIDA" in 2019 and "Marco Bozzarri" in 2021 in Veakeio and Petras' theater.

Aneta Witosz Vocalist, Clarinetist, and Music Educator.

In 2006, Aneta began her studies at the State Music School in Jastrzębie-Zdrój, specializing in clarinet playing. She later attended the University of Silesia in Katowice, where she achieved a Bachelor's degree in Musical Education, focusing on Eurhythmics in Child Education. She was distinguished as the best graduate from 2015-2018. From 2018 to 2023, she pursued Master's studies at the Academy of Art in Szczecin: one in Musical Education with a specialization in conducting and music teaching, and the other in vocal studies: solo Singer.



Simultaneously, she delved into the physiological aspects of voice at the College of Health Sciences in Bydgoszcz, earning a Postgraduate degree in General and Clinical Speech Therapy. Her stage experiences, in addition to solo concerts, include performances with the "Pomerania Singers" Vocal Ensemble, the Maritime University Choir in Szczecin, Silesian Chamber Choir "Ad libitum," and the University of Silesia Choir "Harmonia." Furthermore, her group performances have been recognized at international events in the Philippines, Slovakia, Georgia, and Austria.

She participated in recordings such as "Gwiazdkujemy" (2022) and "Folk songs from the collection of Paweł Pustówka" (2020). Awards and honors include:

- First place and dean's award, International Competition "XIV Ročník celoslovenskej interpretačnej súťaže s medzinarodnou účasťou" (Ružomberok - Slovakia, 2017)
- Third place and award for the best interpretation of a Polish song, National Vocal Competition (Lublin - Poland, 2016)
- Distinction, V International French Song Festival "Grand Prix Edith Piaf" (Kraków - Poland, 2013)

Aneta works as a singing teacher and ear training educator at the State Music School.

Leonardo De Lisi is an internationally renowned Opera singer. He has been active as a recitalist for over thirty-five years throughout the world, after an intense period of studies with G.Souzay, D.Baldwin, E.Ameling, I.Gage and following great success in many competitions devoted to the Lied and Art Song, such as Hugo Wolf Stuttgart 1987, the Walter Gruner Lied Contest London 1989, special Ravel Prize in Saint-Jean-de-Luz 1987, Seghizzi International Contest in Gorizia 1996 and Lied category at the 1994 IVC 's-Hertogenbosch.



Among several CD's, the complete Respighi songs for Channel Classics and of F. Cilea (Bongiovanni), recitals of CastelnuovoTedesco (Vocalia), Luigi Denza and Alfredo Piatti (Hungaroton) art songs, Vivaldi's "Il Giustino" (EMI and Bongiovanni), the title roles in Monteverdi's "L'Orfeo" and "Il ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria" (Bongiovanni) and in Gasparini's "Il Bajazet" (Glossa). In 2009 EMI included one aria by Vivaldi performed by De Lisi in a CD coffret called "100 Best tenor voices". As a pupil of C.Desderi and I.Cotrubas, he has worldwide operatic career and has sung as a soloist under Gavazzeni, Prêtre, Maag, Plason, Lloyd-Johnson, Luisi, Vasary, Gorli, Pfaff, Bartoletti, Bellugi, Rattle, Christie, Bardazzi, Dawson, Malgoire, Curtis and Aprea. He has been teaching Art Song, Oratorio and Lied at the Firenze Conservatory since 1998.

Philip Modinos has been active in the world of performing arts since 1996. He started his studies with his father John Modenos and mother Jenny Drivala. Other teachers (in instruments as well) include John Apeitos, Zoe Zeniodi, Christos Papageorgiou, Yannis Georgiadis, Yannis Anastasakis.

He did his Bmus in Singing with John Wakefield and Mary Hill and later in Piano with Douglas Finch at Trinity College of Music and his MA at Royal Academy of Music as an Onassis Scholar under Philip Daghan and Dominic Wheeler. Philip has sung some of the greatest roles in the Operatic repertoire in Greece, Cyprus, England, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, America and Egypt. He has received exceptional reviews for his work.



He has appeared with: National Opera of Greece – Athens, Athens Concert Hall, Thessaloniki Concert Hall, Larisa Conservatory, National Orchestra of Athens, National Orchestra of Thessaloniki, Municipal Orchestra of Athens, Municipal Orchestra of Thessaloniki, Larisa Symphony Orchestra, Opera Alexandria (Egypt), Opera Classica Europa (Germany), Teatro della Fera – Valladolid (Spain), Bellano Lyrica – Bellano (Italy), Barbican Centre – London, St John's Smith Square – London, 16th Festival of Ancient Drama – Cyprus, to name but a few. He has also worked for the National Theatre of Greece as well as the theatre company “Theatriki Diadromi”.

Roles include:

Opera

Radames (Aida), Manrico (Il Trovatore), Rodolfo (La Bohème), Cavaradossi (Tosca), Pollione (Norma), Don Carlo, Don Jose (Carmen), Pinkerton (Butterfly), Turridu (Cavalleria Rusticana), Siegfried (Siegfried), Idomeneo, Canio/Pepe (Pagliacci), Alfredo (Traviata), Adorno (Boccanegra), Otello/Cassio (Otello), Ishmael (Nabucco), Luigi (Il tabarro), Creonte (Antigona), Macduff (Macbeth).

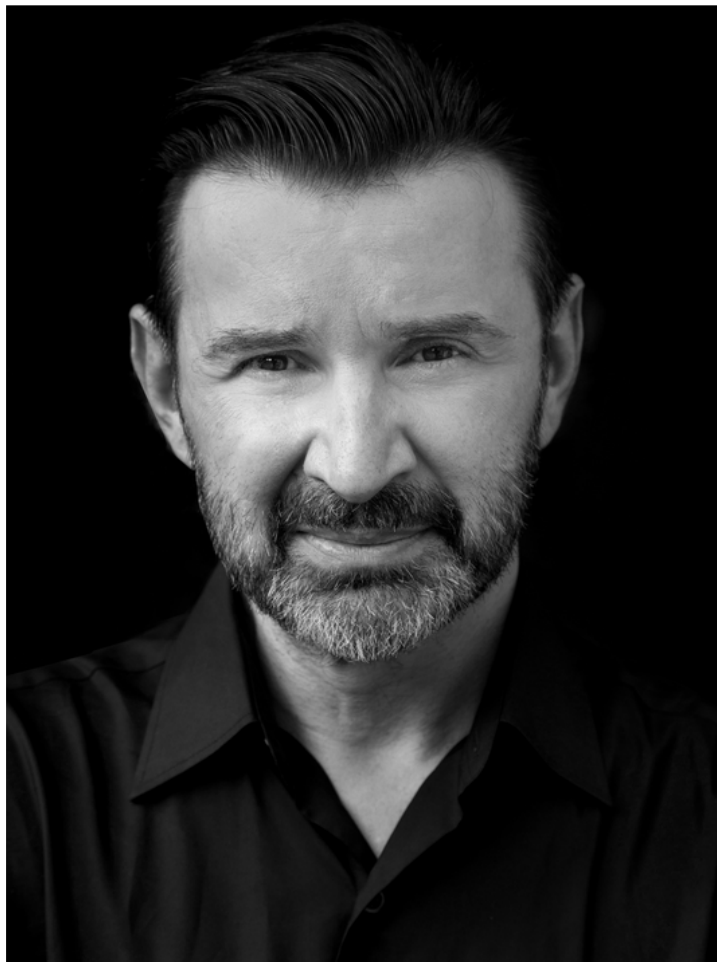
Oratorio

Verdi - Requiem, Dream of Gerontius, Puccini - Messa di Gloria, Dvorak Stabat Mater, Saint-Saëns Oratorio de Noël, Stravinsky - Les Noces, Bruckner - Te Deum, Chilcott Requiem. <https://philipmodinos.ueuo.com/>

Dimosthenis Christos Stavrianos

Born in Athens, he studied classical singing and music theoretics. Participated in seminars - master classes around the world under internationally famous artists. In 2007, during a contest of the E.U. program La bottega delle Voci – Opera dei Giovani, he won a scholarship following project's master classes.

He has appeared in Greece, Italy, Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland, England, Scotland, Eire, Belgium, Russia, Cyprus, Turkey and Egypt in significant halls as Wiener Musikverein, Moskow Tchaikovsky Hall, Eberbach Basilika, Megaron Athens, Odeon Herodes Atticus, Megaron Thessaloniki, Basilica della Santa Casa Loreto, Athens Ancient Roman Forum etc. Collaborated with remarkable organization like Teatro



Petruzzelli Bari, Opera Classica Europa, Virtuosi Brunenses, Philharmonia Athens Orchestra, Fondazione Lirico Petruzzelli, Ensemble Almazis, Ensemble 1619, Megaron Thessaloniki Concert Hall Organisation, Athens Municipal Orchestra, Greek Composers Union, Piraeus National Theater, Petit Opera du Monde, Athens Chamber Opera in appearances include *Figaro* *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Guglielmo Così fan tutte*, *Il Conte d'Almaviva* *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Belcore L'elisir d'amore*, *Silvio I Pagliacci*, *Peter Hänsel und Gretel*, *Dr. Malatesta Don Pasquale*, *Sid Albert Herring*, *Escamillo Carmen*, *Sharpless Madama Butterfly*, *Giorgio Germont cover La Traviata*, *Il Conte di Luna cover Il Trovatore*, *Scarpia cover Tosca*.

He has interpreted oratorios and concert music such Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elias*, Saint Saens *Oratorio de Noel*, Brahms *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Theodorakis *Axion Esti*, Faure's *Requiem*, Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, Schubert's *Winterreise*, J.S. Bach, D. Buxtehude and G.P. Telemann cantatas and *Carmina Burana* C. Orff staged, ballet & concert.

He also appeared at Moscow Easter Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival, Rassegna Internazionale di Musica Sacra Loreto, Perthshire Festival, Istanbul International Music Festival, Patmos Sacred Music festival, Mote Dance Fest, Greek Opera Festival and at Mittelland Sommerfest Bern .

He has performed premieres of contemporary music, recorded most of them, some of as a part of the project *Medieval and Recent Greece: Studies in language, literature, history and civilization*, of Granada University.

Lyrics

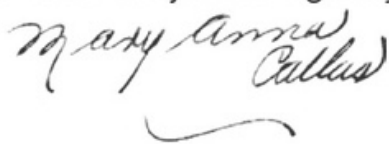
Maria Callas

The immortal heroine

Η αθάνατη ηρωίδα

By Carla Zanin

*Being no poet, having no fame,
Permit me just to sign my name.*

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Anna Callas". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

New York, 28 January 1937

Thirteen-year-old Maria wrote it, in the autograph book of the school in New York, on January 28, 1937: a few days later she would leave for Greece with her mother and sister.

Section 1

Overture from La Traviata

(Recorded voice)

I remember that my only concern at that time was about my hands. I never knew where to put them; I felt them useless and cumbersome. Furthermore, my teacher used to complain - now I understand she had a thousand reasons - about my incredible outfits. Once she saw me appear in a dark red skirt, a frilly blouse in another bright and loud shade of red, and, on my braided hair, a horrendous Musetta-style hat. I felt incredibly elegant, and I was deeply upset when Mrs. Elvira snatched that absurd headpiece away, shouting, "I won't give you any more lessons if you don't make an effort to improve your appearance!"

My mother was very strict; I had to focus solely on studying and couldn't waste time on such nonsense! This allowed me to build a vast and profound artistic experience, but, on the other hand, it entirely deprived me of the joys of adolescence and its innocent pleasures: fresh, pure, irreplaceable.

(taking the red hat from the suitcase)

Maria

Under the pretext that to sing well one must be robust and flourishing, I was literally stuffed, morning and night, with pasta, chocolate, buttered bread, and zabaglione. I was round and ruddy, with a multitude of pimples that drove me crazy. So, for the first time, at less than fifteen years old, I appeared on stage in the authoritative role of the prima donna. My part was that of Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and everything went very well. But I was desperate because my face was swollen and distorted due to a terrible toothache. It has always been like this, at every important turning point in my career. Oh yes! Inevitably and immediately I had to pay in person with sorrow or physical pain for all my triumphs.

Aria: “Voi lo sapete o mamma”, *Cavalleria Rusticana*

Santuzza

Mother, you know that before Turiddu became a soldier, he was betrothed to Lola. He returned and discovered she was married; and he tried to extinguish the flame in his heart with a new love: he loved me, and I loved him. Lola was envious of my happiness, forgot her husband, and burned with jealousy... She stole him from me... I've lost my honour: Lola and Turiddu love each other, I cry, I cry!

Section 2

Maria

At twenty years old, alone, and penniless, from Athens I boarded a ship headed for New York, with the prospect of being unable to find my father or my friends anymore... I had no faintest idea of what to expect returning to America at the end of a world war.

But... I wasn't afraid, and it wasn't just about courage, or rather the recklessness typical of my very young age. It was something deeper: an instinctive, boundless trust in divine protection that - I was sure - would not fail me.

And indeed, who was waiting for me at the New York port? The very person I would have least expected: my father...! He had learned of my arrival from one of the Greek-language newspapers printed in America.

I truly cannot describe the boundless relief with which I clung to him, embracing him as if he were a resurrected figure, and crying tears of joy on his shoulder. Dad, Dad!

Aria "O mio babbino caro", Gianni Schicchi

Lauretta

Oh my dear papa
I like him, he is handsome, handsome
I want to go to Porta Rossa
To buy the ring!

Yes, yes, I want to go there!
And if my love were in vain,
I would go to Ponte Vecchio
and throw myself in the Arno!

I am anguished and tormented!
Oh God, I'd like to die!
Papa, have pity, have pity!
Papa, have pity, have pity!

(Recorded voice)

To Elvira de Hidalgo
Tuesday November 9, 1948 –

My dear madam,

This letter of mine will bring you great joy, for a great desire of yours and mine is about to come true. I will finally make my debut in "Norma," with Maestro Serafin at the Florence Teatro Comunale. Now, you can well imagine the work I have and the agony I'm going through until the premiere, even more so until it's over and I see the result. This was arranged a week ago because they were supposed to do 4 performances of "Aida," and Serafin suggested, "Why not do 2 of 'Norma' and 2 of 'Aida'?" So, this great maestro once again paves the way for another success of mine. My dear, please pray that it goes well – pray that I remain in good health because after that performance, if it goes as we hope and dream, I will be the queen of singing in Italy, not to mention the entire world, simply because I attain vocal perfection, and there is no other 'Norma' in the world!

With 'Norma' and 'Aida,' I am in command. Already for 'Aida,' all theaters want me at any condition and price, and if God wishes 'Norma' to go well, you will see how the path will align. Dear teacher, our work and your care for my voice and your precious advice will take me where we have always dreamed. In these days, I am putting all my

will and wisdom into 'Norma,' and may God be kind and keep me in excellent health. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Maria

I have loved all the characters I've portrayed. There's Violetta, who, with great dignity and nobility, finally accepts purification without ever becoming a sentimental, traumatized fool. Then there's Anna Bolena, Lady Macbeth, and Medea... Medea, yes, of course, she's a terrible character, but Jason is even worse.

I used to be crazy about Fedora... The list is incredibly long... but with Norma, it's different. She's like me. Norma may appear very strong, sometimes fierce, but she's a little lamb that roars like a lion; a woman who suffers, who complains, proud to show her feelings and ultimately proves that she cannot be evil or unjust in a situation for which she is fundamentally the only one responsible.

I wake up at night and think of her... My tears in Norma were dramatically real.

Aria "Casta diva", Norma

Norma

Pure Goddess, whose silver covers
These sacred ancient plants,
we turn to your lovely face
unclouded and without veil...
Temper, oh Goddess,
the hardening of you ardent spirits
temper your bold zeal,
Scatter peace across the earth
Thou make reign in the sky...

Maria

By the way! I do NOT want to go to Lisbon! I must rest a bit – I need to preserve my voice! And what about the repertoire Can you believe? They offered two performances of *Turandot*, then one *Ballo in maschera*, then *Don Giovanni* and then a recital.... *Turandot*: game over! *Ballo in maschera*: it's not one of my favorite, *Don Giovanni*: I don't know it yet and I am going to sing next year, anyway.

Section 3

(Recorded voice)

Dear Battista,

Today I was eagerly awaiting a letter from you, which never arrived. I don't know why. I don't want to believe that you haven't written to me. I'm sure you had written, but the mail is playing tricks on you, just as it did to me. However, it has spoiled my entire day. I'm no longer in a good mood; in fact, I am very sad. At least when I receive news from you, I feel good, full of determination, ready to begin a long, monotonous day of study and nothing else. Instead, today I must contend with sadness.

How are you, my love, and what are you doing? I repeat, write to me, frequently and at length. I think of you a lot. You are always close, and I love you even more when I see that you show me all your affection. Know that the more you show me your love, the more I love you. I can't wait to be with you, to be pampered, and to take my place as your wife.

Today, more than any other day, I feel a strong desire to take the train and return to you! But as always in my life, for one reason or another, there is a duty, a responsibility to fulfill first. And then, what does this life offer me in return?

I send my regards, my kisses, and eagerly await a letter from you filled with love and anticipation.

Forever yours,
Maria

Overture from Carmen

Maria

If Battista wanted, I could abandon my career at any moment and without the slightest regret because in a woman's life, I mean in a true woman's life, love is more important, it's the only thing that matters in life, with no possibility of comparison with any artistic triumph. What are success and fame compared to the joys of love in life? And I sincerely wish, to those unfortunate enough to be deprived of it, a quarter, or even a tenth, of my happiness.

Aria "Habanera", Carmen

Love is a rebellious bird
that nobody can tame,
and you call him quite in vain
if it suits him not to come.

Nothing helps, neither threat nor prayer.
One man talks well, the other's mum;
it's the other one that I prefer.
He's silent but I like his looks.

Love! Love! Love! Love!

Love is a gypsy's child,
it has never, ever, known a law;
love me not, then I love you;
if I love you, you'd best beware! etc.

The bird you thought you had caught
beat its wings and flew away ...
love stays away, you wait and wait;
when least expected, there it is!

All around you, swift, so swift,
it comes, it goes and then returns ...
you think you hold it fast, it flees
you think you're free, it holds you fast.

Love! Love! Love! Love!

Love is a gypsy's child,
it has never, ever, known a law;
love me not, then I love you;
if I love you, you'd best beware!

Section 4

(Recorded)

To Battista, November 18, 1948

My dear, I am so pessimistic, and everything distresses me, troubles me, and everything I do, I am convinced I have done wrong. So, I start to get nervous, to lose heart, and sometimes, I even get to the point of invoking death to free myself from the torment I always have.

You see – I wish to give so much more in everything I do. That is, in art as well as in my love for you. In singing, I wish my voice always obeyed as I want it to – but it seems I want too much. The vocal instrument is ungrateful and doesn't give you everything. In fact, I would say it's rebellious and doesn't want to be commanded or dominated, to put it better. It always wants to escape, and I suffer because of that. So much so that if I continue like this, you will have a neurotic in your hands.

I also suffer in my love for you because I don't know how to give you more! I wish, I don't know, to be able to offer more and more always, and I know that I have nothing more to give because I am only a human being.

I kiss you with love,
Yours, Maria

Maria

Serafin says that he is incredibly happy with me, but unfortunately I am not at all. I'm convinced I can do 100 times better, but the voice doesn't satisfy me and doesn't make me what I want. Oh yes, when I sing I seem calm, confident, strong... but in reality I torment myself with the unbearable fear of not knowing how to give the best of myself. The voice is a mysterious instrument that often reserves us sad surprises, and so, before the start of the show I entrust myself to the Lord and humbly whisper to him: "I am in your hands".

But at the same time, I'm not satisfied, I'm not the type to take things as they come. I want the best in everything! I want my man who is better than all men, I want my art first and better than all. In short, I want to have everything, even everything I carry on me that is better than all the others, if it were possible.

But I know I can't, and I worry so much. Why!? Help me, please, maybe you think I'm exaggerated... or crazy? No, I'm just like that, full stop!! "Be careful, Maria," a very dear friend of mine often repeated to me, "remember that Chinese proverb that says: «He who rides the tiger will never be able to get off again.» No, dear friend, don't be afraid: I will do everything to never get off the tiger!!! I want to win!

Aria “Nel dì della vittoria”, Macbeth

LADY MACBETH

(Reading)“On the day of victory I met them ...
I was stupefied by the things I heard;
When the king’s messengers saluted me as
Thane of Cawdor, prophecy given
by the same witches who predicted a crown on my head...!
Hide this secret in your heart. Farewell!”

Ambitious spirit are you, Macbeth. You long for greatness.
but will you be malicious? Full of mis-steps is the path
of power, and woe to him who the foot
doubtfully places upon it, and draws back!

Come, hurry! To set alight
that cold heart do I wish!
The bold undertaking to fulfill
I will give you valor.
The prophetesses promised to you
the throne of Scotland ...
What is the delay? Accept the gift,
Ascend me to the throne to rule!

Duncan will be here? Here? Tonight?
Now arise, infernal ministers,
which animate the blood and urge on mortals!
You, night, wrap it up in filthy darkness;
May that stabbed breast not see the dagger!

Section 5

(Recorded voice)

To Wally Toscanini on February 1, 1964

Dear friend, I am grateful to you for understanding my soul through your voice. You, with your sensitivity, can understand how much suffering in the past years... I think you know what I would like to tell you, but I hate words – I can only speak with my voice. My heart, my soul, can be seen through that. You saw it and I am eternally grateful to you.

I care of you so much. We speak to each other with heart and soul. Forgive me if I don't know how to express myself when I'm with you, but my underlying theme is a

great shyness and almost jealousy and fear that they will see inside my soul which is so sensitive and vulnerable. It's my defense. Thank you.

Maria

Manon intermezzo

Maria

I have had so much glory, I can't deny it, but also so many smacks and kicks that the woman in me rebels. Unfortunately, I am very much a woman, and the world sees me so differently, they don't understand who I really am. Forgive me if I haven't been able to be more open and spontaneous: remember the lamb and the lion? It's exactly like that, I am the lamb, I am a shy person who hides behind those appearances of pride. You will agree that recently, there has been no art with me, but rather, harsh, and obscene battles, with practically always invented journalistic scoops against me.

I have a great wound, still bleeding, which perhaps may never heal.

Scena "Mimi... speravo di trovarvi qui", La Bohème

MARCELLO

Mimi!

MIMI

I was hoping to find you here.

MARCELLO

Yes, we've been here a month

at the innkeeper's expense.

Musetta teaches singing to the patrons,

I am painting those warriors

on the façade.

It's cold. Come inside.

MIMÌ

Is Rodolfo here?

MARCELLO

Yes.

MIMÌ

I can't go in, no, no!

MARCELLO

Why?

MIMÌ

Oh good Marcello, help me! Help me, do!

MARCELLO

What's happened?

MIMÌ

Rodolfo ...Rodolfo loves me and avoids me;
my Rodolfo is consumed
with jealousy.

A step, a word,

a necklace, a flower

make him suspicious,

so that he is vexed and angry.

Sometimes at night I pretend to be asleep,

and I can feel him intently spying

on my dreams in my face.

He constantly cries:

you're no good to me;

find yourself another lover,

you're no good to me!

Alas! Alas!

It's the fury talking inside him,

I know, but what can I answer him, Marcello?

MARCELLO

Two people like you

shouldn't live together.

MIMÌ

You I re right; you're right;

we must part.

Help us, oh do help us;

we have tried ...

...many times, but in vain.

MARCELLO

I'm easy?going with Musetta, ...

... and she with me, because ...

...we love lightheartedly.

Singing and laughter, these are the flowers
of lasting love!

MIMÌ

You're right, you're right, we must leave one another ...
...Do what you can for the best.

MARCELLO

Right! I'll wake him now.

MIMÌ

Is he asleep?

MARCELLO

He landed here
an hour before dawn
and fell asleep on a bench.
Look.
as Mimì coughs
What a cough!

MIMÌ

Since yesterday I've been chilled
to the bone. He left me last night,
saying: It's all over.

Maria

God has given me two great crosses to bear. The first one is my mother, who has never been entirely normal, unfortunately, ever since I was a child. She had already attempted suicide with actual poison, and in her letters, she expressed deep regret for giving birth to me and cursed me in a despicable manner, all because I refused to give her more money.

The second cross is my dear husband, who has squandered three-quarters of my money and presents himself as a millionaire with my funds!! I am trying to do the best I can to be well. I have incredible friends, but only I know my suffering.

Naturally, it is very difficult to sing under these circumstances – unhappy birds can no longer sing, can't they?

Aria “E lucevan le stelle”, Tosca

And the stars were shining,
And the earth was scented.
The gate of the garden creaked
And a footstep grazed the sand...
Fragrant, she entered
And fell into my arms.

Oh, sweet kisses and languorous caresses,
While feverishly I stripped the beautiful form of its veils!
Forever, my dream of love has vanished.
That moment has fled, and I die in desperation.
And I die in desperation!
And I never loved life so much,
Loved life so much!

Section 6

(Recorded voice)

From Elsa Maxwell, July 1959

Dear Maria,

I'm writing to wish you and Battista a wonderful voyage aboard that marvelous yacht, with the marvelous and intelligent "host" Ari [Onassis] and the former statesman who saved the world in 1940 [Churchill]. In fact, you are replacing Garbo, who is now too old, aboard the Christina. Good luck. I've never liked Garbo, and I've always loved you. From now on, enjoy every moment of your life. Receive (and this is a very delicate art) everything that comes your way. Give (this is not such a delicate art, but important) all that you can give. This is the path to true happiness, which you must discover on your own. A big hug.

Maria

I am breaking up with Battista. I already know what you might be thinking about the reasons, but believe me, it's not exactly what you think. These are personal reasons and disagreements. And believe me, they are valid reasons. Now, I have one pressing concern that haunts me day and night: getting a quick and valid divorce... maybe in the United States?

I had a lot of fun on the cruise with Ari, finally true rest – no phone, various things, commitments, and bloodthirsty journalists. Absolutely nothing, just fresh air, sun, sea, and love. From Monte Carlo to Portofino, then we continued to Capri, what a wonder...!

And then, off to my beloved Greece; I don't remember exactly where, but certainly an island, and then Athens, then Rhodes and Delphi, and then, well, we'll see...

Aria "E' strano...Sempre libera", La Traviata

Violetta

How strange! How strange!
I have these words engraved in my heart!
Would a serious love be a misfortune for me?
What's your decision, oh troubled soul of mine?
No man has set you on fire before
Oh what joy I didn't know
being loved, loving!
And could I reject it out of the barren insanity of my living?

Ah, maybe he's the one who
often rejoiced painting my soul
alone amid excitements
with his occult colours
How modest and vigilant he
climbed the sad doorsteps
and lit up a new fever
arousing my love!
Such a love that makes
the whole universe palpitate
mysterious and lofty
crucifixion and delight for my heart...

Madness! This is a futile delirium!

Madness! This is madness, a futile delirium!
Poor woman, alone, abandoned
in this crowded desert
that's called Paris
what do I hope for now on?
What must I do?
Have fun!
Perish in the vortices of pleasure!

I must stay always free
cavorting from joy to joy
I want my living to run
through paths of pleasure
day in and day out
always happy in hangouts
among always new delights
my thoughts should fly!!

Section 7

Maria

When singers put so much energy and determination into a performance, like me, they are exhausted, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Before a show, I am tense as I strive to prepare myself to give my best. In this phase, I exercise extreme self-control, trying to make every note, every gesture, exactly as it should be. I'm a hopeless perfectionist because I've set the bar at a level that's nearly impossible to maintain, and it consumes me internally. It's an immensely difficult task, extremely exhausting, and it's impossible for me to do it when I have so little strength.

By the way! I forgot to tell you that I almost married Aristo once, but as the wedding day approached, I ran away! That's why he married the other one! And then, after three weeks, he was at my door, in tears, asking for forgiveness!!

In business, he truly is unsurpassed. I remember when he used to say to me, "Making money? It's easy! The hard part is making the first million; the others fall into your lap." But in love, he was... let's say, a bit foolish... although that's an understatement compared to the terms used with him (*bastard*)... We should never marry out of spite... or lust for power. Not even with an ex-first lady! I have never hated Jackie, but I hate her sister. I hate her.

I have a recurring dream. I always dream it, Onassis. I want to help him, but I can't. We're in a hotel room, and we had packed many things in our suitcases. We were looking out the window, and everything was desolate. As far as the eye could see, it was all just a wasteland of mud. We were deeply affected, shocked. Then the phone rang, and the voice on the other end announced a call from Churchill. The atmosphere was filled with gloomy despair.

And then I would wake up.

Now I still have the image of Aristo in front of me and his last words whispered to me on his deathbed: "I have loved you; not always well, but as much and as best as I could. I did my best."

Final scene of Medea, by Cherubini

MEDEA

What now? I am Medea!
And I let them live?
What have I done? Where are they?

Oh, dark Tisiphone! Relentless goddess!
Destroy my love and pity in my bosom!
Give me back the dagger, dropped from my hand!
I will repair my weakness,
A vile instant of uncertainty!
Oh coward heart! It will not be forever shy!
The wife of Jason will not regret the killing of her father!
You will not always be doubtful, my heart!
The bride of Jason learned from him to
To overcome a vain romance!

CHOIR

Oh pity of us! Horrible revenge!

MEDEA

Oh, cry of pain! Oh, sweet voice of revenge!

CHOIR

Horror! Oh, fierce vision!

MEDEA

Those desperate cries go deeper in my soul!

CHOIR

Horror! Oh, fierce vision!

MEDEA

Those desperate cries are sweeter to me than a song of joy!

JASON

Poor Dirce, faithful wife! What a cruel fate, alas,
This love of mine gave to you!

CHOIR

The punishment must fall on the gloomy sorceress a
And she must die!

JASON

That cruel misdeed condemns you, direce, to die,
And take your caress away from me!

MEDEA

No more doubts or fear!
I'll get over, I will take full revenge!
Eumenides, fly to them,
Take my victims!
My children, I will kill you!
Take the victims!

(Medea runs to close in the temple. Jason and the people rush in riot)

JASON

Oh Gods, oh Gods! The vile crime punishment will not know?
Gods, where are my sons? Gods, give them back to me!
Your goodness may protect them!
Oh, my faithful Dirce! Oh fatal day!

CHOIR

Revenge, right Heaven, you will have of this horrendous fault!
Or unfortunate father! Let's despise the cruel!

JASON

She must die!

CHOIR

With her blood, with his torment,
This horrible sorrow clashes our souls!

JASON and CHOIR

Her blood will pay the blood her rage has spilled!

NERIS

(leaves the temple)
Ah, sir, the cruel ...

JASON

Speak, come on!

NERIS

... Your woman, now, in the temple, the cruel, now...

JASON

Out of pity, what did he do?

NERIS

... she wants to kill the children!

CHOIR

Oh gods! Oh horrible mother!

JASON

If we are still on time, let's save them!

(Medea appears on the temple door, wields high the bloody dagger, and is surrounded by the three Eumenides)

MEDEA

Stop all of you! It's done!

(to Jason) Mothers of the whole world will tremble looking at you!
Happier than you now, I go straight to Hell,
Following a well-known path, for me always open!
After a thousand torments I will also see you reach me there:
And on the shores of the Styx my shadow will await you!

(a blaze of flame comes out of the temple)

JASON, NERIS, CHORUS

Right heaven! Oh terror!
Earth and heaven are flames! The burning sky!
Already the abyss opens!
Let us leave this cursed land!

Maria

Medea?? Violettaaaa, Normaa, Lady Macbeth? Anna Bolena, Lucia, Amina, Fedora?
Where are you? Where am I?
Who are you? Who am I?
I don't feel anything anymore, no emotion, no passion... FINALLY

Recorded track

Maria Callas sings "La mamma morta" from Giordano's Andrea Chenier

They killed my mother at my room door.
She died and she saved me!
Then, in the night, I wandered with Bersi...
When suddenly a livid glare flashed
and enlightened before my steps the dark alley!
I looked back! The house in which I grew up was burning!
So, I was alone!
The void around me! Hunger and misery!
The need, the danger! I fell sick,
and Bersi, so kind and pure,
sold her beauty for me!
I bring bad luck to those who love me!
And it was in that pain that love came to me!
A harmonious voice, and it said:
 "Live once again! I am life!
In my eyes and in your sky!
You're not alone!
I will gather up your tears!
I'm on your path and I'll uphold you!
Smile and hope! I am Love!
All around is blood and mud?
I am divine, I am oblivion!
I am the God who moves the world.
I come down from the Empyrean
And I make the earth a sky! Ah!
I am Love, I am Love, Love!"