



I DUE FOSCARI

Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave after *The Two Foscari* by Lord Byron

Opera in three acts
Sung in Italian

From Teatro alla Scala, Milan

Recorded in 2016

Running Time: 2h 09 min

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor	Michele Mariotti
Stage Director	Alvis Hermanis
Set Designer	Alvis Hermanis
Costume Designer	Kristīne Jurjāne
Lighting Designer	Gleb Filshinsky

Teatro alla Scala Chorus and Orchestra

ARTISTIC TEAM

Francesco Foscari	Plácido Domingo
Jacopo Foscari	Francesco Meli
Lucrezia Contarini	Anna Pirozzi
Jacopo Loredano	Andrea Concetti
Barbarigo	Edoardo Milletti
Pisana	Chiara Isotton
Foot Soldier	Azer Rza-Zade
Servant	Till von Orlovsky

A production of Servus TV and UNITEL CLASSICA, in co-production with Fondazione Teatro alla Scala

PRESENTATION

“Plácido Domingo is the definitive Francesco of recent times” - *Financial Times*

“To see him again on stage is a joy. From here to eternity” - *La Stampa*

“One can only marvel at his enormous musicality, his ageless vocal quality, his enviable stage presence” - *Il corriere musicale*

Here is Plácido Domingo’s latest conquest: the leading baritone role of Francesco Foscari in Verdi’s darkly atmospheric, melodically generous early opera, based on Lord Byron’s play. Set in 15th-century Venice, *I Due*

Foscari is the forerunner of *Simon Boccanegra*, and Domingo's triumph as the Doge set the seal on this critically lauded new production from Milan's Teatro alla Scala, the ultimate Verdi shrine.

Declaring the legendary singer "the definitive Francesco of recent times", the *Financial Times's* reviewer also had high praise for the rest of La Scala's superb cast, from "Andrea Concetti's solid Loredano, to the immaculate Francesco Meli in a perfect match for Jacopo. Anna Pirozzi makes a triumphant house debut as Lucrezia. She wins hearts and minds through fearsome dramatisation and thrilling vocal power. But the revelation of the night is [conductor] Michele Mariotti. Here is an interpretation of unbridled elasticity [...] There is the whiff of Venice's sea breeze and a surge in its lagoon. The well-drilled chorus of patricians sends a chill down the spine. Mariota is the wunderkind of the Italian repertoire."

SYNOPSIS

Act I

A hall in the Doge's Palace, Venice.

Venice, 1457. The Council of Ten and the Senate have assembled for a mysterious reason. Among their members is Loredano, an enemy of the Foscari, whom he holds responsible for the assassination of some of his relatives. Jacopo Foscari, son of Doge Francesco, is brought before them from prison to stand trial for having illegally returned to his hometown from exile, to which he had been condemned after an unjust accusation of murder. While waiting to be introduced into the Council's presence, Jacopo gazes out from the balcony at Venice, the memory of which was his only comfort during exile. He then enters the Council hall, with no illusions of receiving clemency there.

Hall in the Foscari palace.

Lucrezia Contarini, Jacopo's wife, is determined to go to the Doge and ask him to intervene in defense of his son, but her handmaidens restrain her. For Lucrezia, in despair, the only remaining option is to pray to heaven. When her friend Pisana tells her of the sentence handed down by the Council of Ten confirming Jacopo's exile, Lucrezia vents her contempt and rails against the Venetian patrician class.

A hall in the Doge's Palace, Venice.

As they leave the judgement hall, members of the Council comment on the event: a letter, written secretly by Jacopo to the Sforzas, had made his banishment inevitable; the Doge's son must return to exile in Crete.

The Doge's private rooms.

Alone, the Doge laments the fate of his son and deploras his own harsh condition as a father. Lucrezia enters, claiming that her husband is innocent and inveighing against the Ten. However, the Doge has no choice but to remind her of the law and of the letter by which Jacopo stands accused. Lucrezia begs the Doge to pray with her.

Act II

The state dungeons.

In the darkness of the prison, Jacopo, in a delirium, believes he's seeing the ghost of Count Carmagnola, whom his father the Doge had condemned to death, handing him his bloodstained skull. Jacopo collapses, but Lucrezia comes to his aid and tells him of the sentence passed by the Council. In the distance a barcarole is heard, while the couple clings to the hope that they may share their sorrows together in the future. They are joined by the Doge, who embraces them both and exhorts them to trust in divine justice. Loredano arrives and tells the prisoner that

he must leave Venice alone, rejoicing in the misfortune that has struck the family he so bitterly hates.

Hall of the Council of Ten.

The Council decrees the departure of Jacopo Foscari, accused of murder and of plotting against Venice. The Doge enters and sits on his throne, while Jacopo stands between his guards. When the Council's sentence has been read out, Jacopo begs in vain for pardon from his father. Lucrezia bursts into the hall. Making her children kneel before the Doge, she beseeches his forgiveness and pity and asks to be allowed to join her husband in exile. But the Council remains adamant: Jacopo shall go into exile alone. After entrusting his children to the Doge's care, Jacopo goes off, while Lucrezia faints into the arms of her ladies-in-waiting.

Act III

The old Piazzetta of St Mark's.

Mingling with the festive crowd are Loredano and Barbarigo, in disguise. The people incite the gondoliers by striking up a barcarole. From the Doge's palace come two trumpeters, and on hearing their blasts the people melt away in fear. On the canal a galley sails past, bearing the ensign of St Mark. Out of the Doge's palace comes Jacopo Foscari, followed by Lucrezia. In deep distress, he bids farewell to all while Loredano exults at the sight of his vendetta fulfilled.

The Doge's private rooms.

Francesco Foscari, alone, ruminates over the premature death of his three sons and the sorry fate of his fourth. Barbarigo enters holding a sheet of paper and declares that the real culprit of the murder has confessed. The Doge exults, for his son's innocence is now proven. But Lucrezia bursts in, announcing that Jacopo, unable to bear the sorrow of having to go back into exile, has died at the moment of departure. The Ten arrive and request the Doge to retire from the affairs of state and to renounce his power. At first the Doge reacts with indignation, but he is so utterly dejected by his family woes that he relinquishes his ring. As he goes out with Lucrezia, he hears the bells of St Mark's announcing the election of the new Doge. Overcome by this final affront, Francesco Foscari collapses and dies.

*Synopsis by Claudio Toscani, courtesy of Teatro alla Scala
Translation Rodney Stringer*