



## Edition Ferenc Fricsay (IX) – G. Donizetti: Lucia di Lammermoor

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### American Record Guide (Moses - 2009.07.01)

This is Lucia in German! It has an all-German-Swiss cast of renowned lieder singers and Mozart specialists. Add to that the redoubtable F-D as Enrico (the villain) and we have perhaps the strangest Lucia recording ever.

Does it work? Not really. I very much doubt that bel canto opera lovers would prefer this over the recordings of Sutherland or Callas, or even Gruberova and Moffo. Also, in this performance, the first scene of Act 3 has been cut. The recording was made in 1953 in Berlin, just after Fricsay had resigned as Music Director of Berlin's Municipal Opera. So the singers and orchestra of that opera were no longer available to him, but he was still Chief Conductor of the RIAS Orchestra.

Maria Stader had a voice that was lyric, pure, and beautiful but not plush. She was a very stylish singer in her usual repertory (Bach, Mozart, Handel). Because she was so small, she was seldom seen on the opera stage. As Lucia, her voice is clear and steady, her coloratura accurate, and she has a nice trill. But her singing lacks temperament; it's more chirpy than expressive. Much the same, though to a lesser extent, is true of Ernst Haefliger's Edgardo. He was admired for the clarity of his voice, but it lacked warmth and romantic appeal. Stader and he sing well together but not in a style that's appropriate to this work. But F-D's Enrico is well realized; he seems at home in (almost) every opera. The minor characters are all at least adequate; so are chorus and orchestra.

Fricsay leads a precise and dynamic performance but it too lacks romantic flavor. The sound, for 1953, is remarkably good – detailed, clear, and warm. No texts or synopsis. For special tastes only!