

DAILY Actor

'The Lisbon Traviata' by Terrence McNally

(Stephen begins to play La Traviata and stands listening to the Prelude, which begins to fill the room.)

STEPHEN: I'll never forget the night she did this at the old Met. The excitement in the air. Everybody was there. Jackie Kennedy was in a box with Leonard Bernstein. No, that was for the return as Tosca seven years later and she was Jackie Onassis and she was with Adlai Stevenson. I'd been in love with the sound of her voice since the first records. That strange, sad siren song I knew she was singing just for me. I could play those records for hours. I had them memorized. Every nuance, the slightest intake of breath, the fiercest tones, the hushed, still pianissimo, Hers was the only voice who heard what I heard, said what I wanted to hear. This would be the first time I'd seen her. I'd waited on line for days for standing room. The curtain rose. I didn't see her at first. She was to one side. I thought she'd be center. But then she sang those first phrases--- "Flora, amici" --- and I saw her. She took my breath away. She wasn't just a voice on a record. She was there, she was real. I was on the same planet at the same moment in time as Maria Callas. The rest of the evening passed like a dream, a dream I remember more clearly than the color of my lover's eyes. I miss you, Mme Callas.

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