DONIZETTI, 1840

3 'FRENCH' OPERAS AND THEIR ITALIAN COUNTERPARTS.

By MICHAEL F. MESSENGER.

In 1840 Gaetano Donizetti, the prolific Bergamasque composer, launched three operas upon the Parisian public, three operas which have maintained a precarious toe-hold in the 'fringe' repertory though usually in versions different from the composer's original conception. The operas in question - La fille du régiment, La favorite and Les martyrs - reveal something of the facility and versatility of Donizetti's invention, for while the first is a gay yet sentimental piece anticipating the operettas of a later era, the other two are heavily dramatic romantic tragedies set in 14th Century Spain and 3rd Century Armenia respectively. No wonder that a jealous Berlioz should write 'No longer can one speak of the opera houses of Paris, but only of the opera houses of M. Donizetti'.

The first of the three works to reach the boards was La fille du régiment - arguably the most consistently satisfactory of them, certainly the one which made the greatest concession to French style and taste - which was performed at the Opéra-Comique on 11th February, 1840. This first performance was far from a success, though there are grounds for thinking that this was as a result of organised protests against the Italian composer's popularity in Parisian operatic circles rather than being a condemnation of the work itself.

Berlioz's criticism of it in the 'Journal des débats' may well be regarded as a personal attack upon the composer and upon his artistic principles, paying as it did scant attention to truth. Berlioz maintained that the work had already been heard in Italy and that it was an imitation of Adam's Le chalet, that it was the sort of trivia easily produced and lacking genuine inspiration, in short that it was a pasticcio produced as a pot-boiler and that Donizetti was wrong to permit such a work to be staged, particularly in view of the forthcoming production of Les martyrs at the Opéra. To be sure, he praised some few pieces, notably the trio 'Tous les trois réunis', but he was very harsh on the overture and on the finale to Act 1. If he had

said no more, his comments may well be acceptable as fair comment from a misinformed, impartial, unimpressed critic, but the pique and envy he felt for Donizetti's success shows only too clearly in the last part of his review in which he lists the works of the Italian which had been or were to be produced within a year and comments sourly on the domination by Donizetti of the Parisian opera houses.

Donizetti could do little about the biased nature of the criticism, of course, but he could (and did) refute the inaccuracies in it - notably the charge of having reworked old material. His reply was published in the 'Moniteur Universel' two days after Berlioz's review and is notable for its dignity and restraint, two qualities so sadly lacking in his critic's attack. Donizetti had the last laugh anyway for the work established itself in the repertory despite the critics; less than a year after its first performance it had already reached its fiftieth playing in Paris and to date it has been performed more than a thousand times at the Opéra-Comique alone.

It was inevitable that it should swiftly be performed in Italy. The translation and adaptation of the original French of Bayard and Saint Georges was carried out by Calisto Bassi, while Donizetti wrote in recitatives and made some other alterations which will be noted later. The Italian premiere took place at La Scala on 3rd October, 1840, and the work reached England (sung in Italian at 'Her Majesty's') seven years later. It remained popular with nineteenth century English audiences in its Italian version, and the 1966 Covent Garden production (103 years after its premiere in the house) was notable in that it was the first time the original French had been used on that stage. Even considering that both La fille du régiment and her creator were out of favour in England for many years and that the Victorians' tendency was to sing almost everything in Italian, one may still express some surprise at this - particularly when it may be argued that the textual and structural alterations made in the Italian actually weaken the piece.

The differences are most clearly indicated by the following tabulation which has been compiled from the French vocal score published by Joubert, the Boosey Italian/English vocal score, and Ricordi's Italian libretto. Equivalent passages are exactly paralleled reading across the page; a dash indicates no equivalent.

French	ACT I	Italian
Sc.1. Introduction, chorus and prayer (Marquise, Hortensius, chorus). Pour une femme de mon sort (Marquise, chorus)		Sc.1. Introduction, chorus and prayer (Marchesa, Ortensio, chorus)
2. [Dialogue: Hortensius, Sulpice]		–
3. Au bruit de la guerre (Marie, Sulpice)		–
–		2. Apparvi alla luce (Maria, Sulpizio)
–		3. Feste? Pompe? (Tonio)
4. Chacun le sait (Marie, Tonio, Sulpice, chorus)		4. [Recitative: Maria, Sulpizio]
5. Depuis l'instant (Marie, Tonio)		5. Ciascun lo dice (Maria, Tonio, Sulpizio, chorus)
6. [Dialogue: Marie, Tonio, Sulpice]		6. Da quell'istante (Maria, Tonio)
7. [Dialogue: Marie, Sulpice]		7. [Recitative: Maria, Tonio, Sulpizio]
8. [Dialogue: Sulpice, Marquise, Hortensius]		–
9. [Dialogue: Sulpice, Marquise, Hortensius, Marie]		8. [Recitative: Sulpizio, Marchesa, Ortensio]
10. Rataplan (chorus)		9. [Recitative: Sulpizio, Marchesa, Ortensio, Maria]
11. Pour mon âme (Tonio, chorus)		10. Rataplan (chorus)
12. Je suis soldat...Il faut partir (ensemble)		11. Qual destino (Tonio, chorus)
		(12. Suo padre ma l'accorda...Convien partir (Maria, Sulpizio, chorus)
		(13. Amici miei (ensemble)
	ACT II	
Sc.1. [Dialogue: Marquise, Duchesse, Notary]		Sc. 1. [Recitative: Ortensio]
2. [Dialogue: Marquise, Sulpice]		2. [Recitative: Maria, Sulpizio]
3. Le journaissait dans le boccage (Marie, Marquise, Sulpice)		3. Sorgeva il di (Maria, Marchesa, Sulpizio)
4. [Dialogue: Marie, Sulpice]		–
5. [Dialogue: Marie, Sulpice, Hortensius]		4. [Recitative: Sulpizio, Ortensio]
6. Par le rang et par l'opulence (Marie, chorus)		5. Le richezze ed il rango (Maria, chorus)
*7. [Dialogue: Marie, Tonio, Sulpice, chorus]		6. [Recitative: Maria, Tonio, Sulpizio, chorus]
8. [Dialogue: Marie, Sulpice, Hortensius, Tonio, chorus]		7. [Recitative: Maria, Sulpizio, Ortensio, Tonio, chorus]
9. Tous les trois réunis (Marie, Tonio, Sulpice)		8. Stretti insiem tutti e tre (Maria, Tonio, Sulpizio)
10. [Dialogue: Marie, Tonio, Sulpice, Marquise]		9. [Recitative: Maria, Tonio, Sulpizio, Marchesa]
Pour me rapprocher de Marie (Tonio)		–
11. [Dialogue: Marquise, Sulpice]		–
12. [Dialogue: Marquise, Sulpice, Hortensius]		–
13. Dance music		10. Dance music
[Dialogue: Marquise, Duchesse, Notary])		
14. [Dialogue: Marquise, Sulpice])		[Recitative: Marchesa, Duchesa, Sulpizio, Notary]
15. [Dialogue: Marquise, Duchesse, Notary])		
16. Ah! c'est elle (ensemble)		(11. Maria...Cara madre (ensemble)
		(12. Giusto ciel (ensemble)

* Joubert's French vocal score does not list an ACT II, Sc.7, but I have adopted continuous numbering, and from this point on I am one number at variance with the published score though I have omitted no scenes listed there.
The Boosey score gives a number of variants, notably one at the beginning of ACT II where a scene in recitative between the Marchesa, Sulpizio and latterly Maria takes the place of the listed ACT II, Sc.1 and 2.

The most significant difference in the two versions is the use of recitative for the Italian adaptation as against the spoken dialogue of the original French. Inevitably this affects the whole character of the piece and, equally inevitably, it results in some compression which in turn leads to a lessening of stature of some of the characters. Particularly is this true of the Duchess of Krakentorp who only appears in the second act which is not a long one and which contains a great many scenes in dialogue. Some measure of this can be appreciated from the tabulation though the fragmentation which appears inherent in this never intrudes since these scenes are entirely continuous, and they are certainly the means of imparting a great deal of information. In the original the Duchess is shown as an inflexible aristocrat of the stiffest possible kind, while the humour of the part, springing from this, is not unsubtle and the character need not (and indeed should not) be 'guyed'. The Marchioness, to give her her English title, goes in some awe of the Duchess, but this relationship with its possibilities for satire is largely destroyed in the Italian version where the solo contribution of the Duchess is limited to a few lines only. The character of the Marchioness, too, is more rounded in the original with her motivation for insisting on Marie's wedding more sympathetically drawn, less selfish, perhaps less superficial, and the brief scenes between her and Sulpice shed light on both their characters. Sulpice is much less the typical operatic soldier than is Sulpizio, and he reveals much more of the healthy cynicism which is a part of the character and which appears to have been blunted in the crossing of the Alps; in short, he is more of an individual.

In general terms, the French version seems tauter, the motivation more reasonable, and the construction better. There is, for instance, less coming and going in Act I of the original (around scenes 2, 3 and 4 of the Italian version) and personally I think it rather a pity that Tonio was given an entrance aria in the Italian - 'Pompe? Feste?' which Donizetti originally composed for Gianni di Calais. By way of retribution perhaps the tenor loses his lovely Act II aria 'Pour me rapprocher de Marie', which John McCormack sang in an Italian version that he had specially translated, so much did he like it.

Marie is less affected by the changes than are the other characters; she is after all the central pivot of the opera, more so perhaps in the Italian where the others have rather less individuality. The Italian recitatives help to spin the piece along and may make it seem more of a unity at a first hearing. This, however, is to ignore the essentially French character of the work and its complete suitability to the style and conventions of opéra comique. Repeated listening serves merely to indicate the superiority of the original French, both as regards the subtlety of the work and the comic effect and dramatic impact of the musical numbers isolated as they are in the original. However, it cannot be denied that the delivery of long stretches of French dialogue by a non-French (or at best partly-French) cast to a non-French audience poses great problems. Wholesale cuts in the dialogue are no real solution for its concentration is such that motivation will be omitted and the character of the work may be changed. Couple this with a too-obviously funny production and the whole is reduced to little more than a pantomime. La fille is not as hardy as her Italian sister, but she is more rewarding - perhaps because of that. The opera is indifferent farce, but first-rate comedy with the occasional touch of genuine sentiment which distinguishes Donizetti's comic operas. It is not great drama, but it is a 'pretty' piece (as Mendelssohn said) and rather more than that, for I think we have seen enough of Donizetti's work in recent years to realise that many of his characters have rather more depth than is often credited them. The same is surely true of La fille and her entourage.

Donizetti's second opera for Paris in 1840 was of a very different kind. To begin with, Les martyrs is a grandiose and sombre religious drama set in the third century, and, as if this were not enough, it differs markedly from La fille du régiment in having been adapted from an Italian original.

Poliuto (as it was originally called) had been composed for Naples in 1838, and Donizetti had conceived the work with the French tenor Adolphe Nourrit in mind. The libretto in 3 acts was by Salvatore Cammarano, and was based upon Corneille's play Polyeucte. The authorities were doubtful of the propriety of portraying the religious theme on stage and Donizetti was perhaps not

entirely surprised when the censor finally ruled against its being staged, even though it was by then in rehearsal.

It was this work, suitably adapted, which Donizetti proposed to use as his 'entrée' to the Paris Opéra. These adaptations involved the translation of the Italian text by Eugène Scribe who also undertook to enlarge it into four acts and to render it more suitable in other ways to French taste.

In a letter written in the Spring of 1839 Donizetti mentions that this will involve him in complete re-writing the recitatives, as well as composing a new Act I finale and adding other passages in French style. Interestingly, he goes on to identify certain peculiarly French elements and habits, and from another source (his acceptance of Membership of the Académie Royale des Beaux Arts) we know of the attention which Donizetti gave to word colours in his composition, and how he attempted to use the text as a springboard for the music. This desire to ensure that the music provides a true accentuation of the text is evident in Les martyrs for in many places the outline and shape of the phrases has been altered to accomodate it. This, of course, is in addition to the major structural alterations which may best be seen from the following, which has been compiled from the French score published by Schonenberger and the Italian scores of Ricordi and Schonenberger.

Les Martyrs	Poliuto
ACT I	
No. 1. Amis silence, ô voute immense (cho)	(1) Scendiam, scendiam (chorus)
2. Arrêtons nous, Polyeucte... Que l'onde salutaire (Néarque, Polyeucte)	(2) Tu sei commosso...D'un'alma troppo fervida (Nearco, Poliuto)
3. Eloignes de ces lieux (Pauline)	(3) Ove m'inoltro (Paolina)
4. Jeune souveraine (chorus)	–
5. Allez! Laissez moi...Toi qui lis (Pauline)	Finchè si compia il rito (ens.) Di quai soavi lagrime (Paolina)
6. Ô Dieu tutélaire (Pauline, chorus)	–
7. Il est trop tard (ensemble)	Mira...Donna! (ens.)

ACT II	ACT I
8. Achevez Pollion...Dieux des Romains (Félix)	–
9. Mort, mort à ces infames (Félix, Pauline, chorus)	–
10. Sévère éxiste un Dieu saveur (Pauline, chorus)	–
11. Gloire a vous (chorus)	(4) Plausi all' indito (chorus)
12. Valeureux habitons... Amour de mon jeune âge (Sévère)	Decio, signor del mondo... Di tua beltade immagine (Severo)
13. Ballet	–
14. De Decius notre souveraine (ens.)	No, l'acciar non fu spietato (ensemble)
ACT III	**ACT II**
–	(5) Inoltra il piè (Callistene, Severo)
15. Dieux immortels...Par pitié (Pauline, Sévère)	(6) Donna! Che!...Il più lieto dei viventi (Paolina, Severo)
16. C'est Polyeucte...Mon seul tresor (Polyeucte, Pauline)	(7) Veleno è l'aura...Fu macchiato l'onor mio (Poliuto)
17. Oui, j'irai dans leur temples (Polyeucte)	Sfolgorò divino raggio (Poliuto)
18. Dieu du tonnerre (chorus))	
19. Maître du monde (chorus))	(8) Celeste un'aura (chorus)
20. Jusqu 'au sein du sanctuaire (ensemble)	(9) Magistrati, guerrieri (ensemble)
ACT IV	**ACT III**
–	(10) Vieni, vieni, al circo (chorus)
–	S'avanza l'ora (Callistene, cho.)
21. L'arrêtest prononcé...Oui, par la foi jurée (Pauline, Sévère, Félix)	–
22. Rêve délicieux...Pour toi ma prière (Pauline, Polyeucte)	(11) Donna! Malvagio!...Ah! fuggi da morte (Paolina, Poliuto)
23. Il nous faut (cho.)	(12) Alle fiere (cho.)
24. Mon devoir notre Dieu (ensemble)	Mertata ho la pena (ensem.)

The comparatives indicated in this tabulation are far from exact for Scribe in his adaptations seems to have worked as much from Corneille as from Cammarano, and is much closer to the original play in consequence. Les martyrs too, has an additional act, and although this has been achieved primarily by splitting Act I of Poliuto into two, there has also been some expansion within numbers which appear as comparatives. Sometimes, too, the motivation and text are totally different; for instance 'Di quai soavi lagrime' is not the same as the French number 5 in which Pauline prays to overcome her feelings for her former lover Sévère, 'Sfolgarò divino raggio' (which springs from

Poliuto learning of Nearco's capture from one of the Christians) is little more than a cabaletta to 'Fu macchiato' while 'Oui, j'irai dans leurs temples' is a separate number motivated by Félix's announcement that Néarque is to be tortured and Pauline's plea that Polyeucte will not attend, while the first act finale of Les martyrs is much more extended than the corresponding Italian scene ending.

These are not immediately apparent from the table but other alterations are. The beginning of the French Act II, for example, where Donizetti has composed a great deal of extra music, and in doing so has significantly enlarged the part of Félix, the Roman governor of Armenia and Pauline's father. Théophile Gautier, writing after the first performance and criticising Scribe's libretto, described the character as 'feeble', but it does seem that by this enlargement the two conflicting ideologies are seen more fully and the conflict against which the relationship of Polyeucte and Pauline is set is better exploited. Strangely, Donizetti changed the bass Felice to a tenor Félix, presumably because of the forces at his disposal rather than because he felt that the Romans were bass-heavy (Sévère baritone and Calistène bass, although the latter's part is reduced in the French). The French number 10 points Pauline's feelings for Sévère more clearly than at any point in Poliuto in which the equivalent is compressed into a few lines of recitative in the Act I finale; the situation is not made clear until the Act II duet for Paolina and Severo insofar as her emotions are involved, although his are immediately pointed in 'Di tua beltade immagine' (French: 'Amour de mon jeune âge').

The brief scene for Callistene and Severo disappears from the beginning of the French Act III, and the soprano/baritone duet is now preceded by a brief prayer for Pauline - addressed, it may be noted, to her Roman gods. This is an indication of the increased concentration upon the central human relationships which exists in Les martyrs, a point which is further emphasised by the French number 16 in which a brief duet between husband and wife expands into the lyrical 'Mon seul tresor' as against the tenor's jealous solo 'Fu macchiato l'onor mio' in the Italian.

Donizetti substantially rewrote Act IV. The aurally

very effective scene for Callistene and his priests at the beginning of the act is replaced by a trio in which Pauline begs Sévère and Félix for the life of Polyeucte, a minor duplication in dramatic terms of her plea embedded in the finale to the preceding act, but by no means unjustified in Les martyrs where Pauline's feelings for her husband seem that much stronger. Musically this trio leans very heavily on the deleted 'Fu macchiato', the melody of which Donizetti obviously decided need not be wasted. The scene changes to the cell in which is Polyeucte whose 'Rêve délicieux' is incomparably superior to the brief passage it replaces, while in the succeeding duet the scores come together again in what is undoubtedly the best-known number in the opera - 'Ô sainte mélodie' (or in Italian 'Il suon dell'arpe angeliche') a theme which returns as the climax of the finale.

There can be little doubt that Poliuto is a more dramatic work than Les martyrs and that it is, therefore, more truly Donizettian. The placing of the numbers in the Italian is generally better conceived with the purely aural effect in mind, and for resonance and aural excitement the French score frequently substitutes grandeur and pageantry with the opportunity for visual impressiveness. Gautier, for instance, praised both scenery and costumes (very extravagent!) and his notice seems to indicate not only the conventions of the Opéra of 1840, but also that these very conventions did not always give the music the opportunity to make a musical impact.

Donizetti has been criticised for his lack of musical delineation between pagan and Christian, but this is perhaps a little unfair since in the context of the opera there is no ethnic or cultural difference between those following the one God and those worshipping many. In any event this lack of characterisation is less evident in the French where the part of Calistène, the conventionally blood-thirsty high priest is cut to a minimum, and certainly Gautier found no such lack at the first performance for he particularly singled out for praise the great finale to Act III with its clear definition of the dramatic conflict between Christianity and Paganism. He did find a lack of general applicability of some of the music to the Roman situation, however - a failing not exactly unparalleled in the operas

of the time where geographical location rarely inspired particular musical colours.

Gautier's generally favourable review (to the composer anyway, if not the librettist) was emphatically not shared by Berlioz who, although he approved the orchestration, described the opera as 'a credo in four acts'. This underlines the main dramatic weaknessof the piece - the difficulty of fully sympathising with Polyeucte who seems almost too good to be true. Even more so in the French, his feelings for his wife seem almost of no importance beside his religious zeal ('Si je t'aime?' he cries to Pauline 'Ah, je t'aime, je t'aime moins peut-être que Dieu, mais plus que moi-même'), and one feels that Scribe's sympathies were more with Pauline and Sévère than with the hero - a disadvantage indeed in an opera which was originally composed for the tenor ! In fact, it is something of a tenor's opera, being originally composed (as Poliuto) for Nourrit, while Duprez was the creator of Polyeucte, and Tamburlik was reputedly one of the most successful interpreters of the role of Poliuto.

Poliuto has a superficial immediacy which was blunted in its translation for the Opéra, but Les martyrs compensates in no small measure by the fuller development of character relationships and by the generally more subtle declamation. It is perhaps over-long for its content and the conventions affecting its composition react against it, but a really good (and costly) production, with Polyeucte cast from real strength, might well prove to be a surprisingly rewarding experience.

Initial reaction in Paris in 1840 was favourable, and Donizetti appeared pleased, but the hoped-for run did not materialise. The ill-luck which had dogged the work in rehearsal continued when Duprez fell ill after the fifth performance, and the final nail in its coffin (so far as the Opéra was concerned) occurred when the new director's bedroom politics affected the repertoire. It ran for 20 performances in all.

An Italian version of Les martyrs (retranslated by Calisto Bassi as I martiri) quickly appeared but it was generally superceded by the original Poliuto which received its premiere in Naples in 1848, ten years after its composer's death.

Les martyrs was included in the prospectus for the 1851 season at Covent Garden, but it did not materialise until the following year. It was performed in Italian as I martiri with Tamburlik as Poliuto, but has never been revived. Poliuto is, however, the subject of occasional revivals (particularly in Italy) the most notable modern one being at La Scala in 1961.

La favorite is an altogether hardier work, although at present (in Britain at least) it appears to be passing through a period of denigration. A good presentation on the stage might alter the slightly contemptuous view of it that many critics appear to hold, for it is nothing if not an intensely dramatic work.

It was constructed (I use the word advisedly) for the Paris Opéra and the first performance took place on 2nd December, 1840.

La favorite is interesting, not so much for the difference between French and Italian versions (which structurally are negligible), but for the way in which an opera that appears to have an essential unity was compiled from disparate sources. Donizetti had undertaken to provide a second grand opera for the Opéra to follow Les martyrs and he started work upon Le duc d'Albe. This latter work he dropped at a fairly late stage, however, and it was not to reach the boards until 1882 in a heavily edited Italian version. The tenor cavatina 'Anges des cieux', however, was transferred to La favorite as 'Ange si pur'. At the same time Donizetti was working upon an opera entitled L'ange de Nisida for a third Parisian theatre. The work was completed, but the bankruptcy of the theatre management prevented a production, and it appears that the new director of the Opéra suggested that this work, suitably altered, would be more acceptable than Le duc d'Albe. Donizetti, however, went further than simply adapting the work for with Vaëz and Royer as his librettists he produced a new opera on the theme of Leonora di Guzman using much of the material from L'ange de Nisida, but also incorporating into it passages and themes from Adelaide (an opera upon which he had apparently been working a few years previously and which was never completed) as well as the tenor solo from Le duc d'Albe.

Interestingly, the part of Léonor is written for a mezzo-soprano (the heroine of L'ange de Nisida was the more usual soprano), another example of the resources available conditioning the form of the work. The lady

in question was Rosine Stolz who may have been directly responsible for the manager requesting the change of work from Le duc d'Albe. Opposite her was Duprez, and, if Gautier's review of the first performance is to be believed, both tenor and mezzo-soprano impressed with dramatic performances. The work seems to have made its way steadily in the repertory of the Opéra for some months, and the original reviews were good enough for Donizetti (as in the case of Les martyrs) to send them to Italy.

The opera itself reached Italy in 1842, billed as Leonora di Guzman for reasons of censorship, the authorities proving reluctant to permit the portrayal of a royal mistress on the stage. The translation was by Francesco Jannetti, and the performance took place at Padua. The opera reached Milan the following year, this time as La favorita with text by the ubiquitous Calisto Bassi, who is concerned in some way with the Italian versions of all three of Donizetti's 1840 operas. An English version by the notorious Fitzball was performed at Drury Lane in 1843, while Covent Garden staged it in 1845 in French and 1847 in Italian.

The work was extremely popular in France during the 19th Century (100 performances in the first eight years and over 600 at the Opéra alone by the beginning of the present century) and it is not infrequently performed in France today. Outside French-speaking countries, however, it is generally known in its Italian version, and in this form is the subject of frequent revivals.

The composer seems not to have prepared a special edition of it for use in Italy. A structural comparison is, therefore, of no significance in indicating differences, but since the French version is not widely known I append the following. The Italian equivalents are included and the vocal distribution is the same except where specifically noted; in all cases such differences are caused by the overlapping of musical numbers in the French and Italian editions.

ACT I

LA FAVORITE	LA FAVORITA
1.(a) Pieux monastère...(Balthazar, Fernand, chorus)	(1) Bell'alba foriera
(b) Une ange, une femme inconnue (Fernand)	(2) Una vergine, un angel di Dio
(c) Toi, mon fils (Balthazar, Fernand)	(3) E fia vero?
2. Rayons dorés (Inès, chorus)	(4) Bei raggi lucenti
3. Silence...Doux zéphir (Inès, cho.)	(5) Silenzio...Dolce zeffiro
4.(a) Gentille messagère (Fernand, Inès)	(6) Messaggera gentile
(b) Mon idole (Léonor, Fernand, Inès)	(7) Ah! mio bene
5. Celui qui vient... Oui ta voix m'inspire (Fernand, Inès)	(8) E l'uom...Sì, che un tuo solo accento.

ACT II

6. Jardins de l'Alcazar... Léonor, viens (Alphonse, Don Gaspard)	(9) Giardini del l'Alcazar (10) Ma de'malvagi invan... Vien, Leonora
7. Ainsi donc...Quand j'ai quitté (Léonor, Inès, Alphonse)	(11) Ebben...Quando le Soglie (12) Poni tregua
8. Ballet	(13) (14) Ballet (15) (16)
9.(a) Ah, Sire (ensemble)	(17) Ah, Sire
(b) Redoutez la fureur (ens.)	(18) Ah, paventa il furor

ACT III

10.(a) Me voici donc (Fernand, Alphonse, Don Gaspard)	(19) A lei son presso
(b) Fernand...Pour tant d'amour (Léonor, Fernand, Alphonse)	(20) O ciel...A tanto amor
11.(a) L'ai-je bien entendu (Léonor)	(21) Fia dunque vero...O mio Fernando
(b) O mon Fernand (Léonor)	
12. Inès, viens (Léonor, Inès, Don Gaspard)	(22) Ines!
...Déjà dans la chapelle (ensemble)	(23) Di già nella cappella (chorus) (24) Ah! che da tanta gioia (ens.)
13. Quel marché de bassesse... Sire, je vous dois tout (ens.)	(25) Oh viltade...(D.Gasparo, chorus) (26) Per me del ciel...Sire, io ti deggio (ens.)

ACT IV

14.(a) Frères, creusons l'asile...Les Cieux s'emplissent (Balthazar, chorus)	(27) Compagni, Andiam...Splendon più belle
(b) Dans un instant (Balthazar, Fernand)	(28) Figlio diletto...
15. Ange si pur (Fernand)	Spirto gentil
16. Es-tu prêt viens (Fernand, Balthazar, Léonor)	(29) Figlio, deh! vien!...Che fino al ciel...
...Que du très haut (Léonor, Fernand, cho.)	
17.(a) Fuyons le monastère (Léonor, Fernand)	Fuggiam da queste soglie
(b) Va t'en dici (Léonor, Fernand, Balthazar, chorus)	(30) Ah! va t'invola

Note: In the Ricordi Italian language vocal score, the brief concluding scene with Baldassare and chorus is omitted, the opera ending on the death of Leonora. However, this scene is included in the Boosey Italian/English version as well as in the original French.

The French edition (Editions L. Crus) uses the original text, of course, while both the libretto published by Rullman of New York and the Ricordi vocal score ('edited and corrected with care' by Mario Parenti in 1960) use what purports to be Jannetti's Italian translation although there are a number of places where these two are at variance. Rullman is nearer the original French, and it may be that one of these versions stems not from Jannetti but from Bassi. The Boosey edition of the vocal score does not name the Italian librettist but is generally identical with Ricordi, and clearly this version with its long tradition of performance dates from the early years of the opera. It certainly lies more easily across the notes in many places than does the Rullman libretto, but there are occasions where the textual alterations seem little more than wilful and, moreover, have the effect of changing the meaning. For instance, in the brief passage of recitative for Alphonse and Don Gaspard which is sandwiched between 'Jardins de l'Alcazar' and 'Léonor, viens', Don Gaspard states: 'Du Saint Père on annonce un important message ....' and Alphonse replies : 'De son sceptre sacré le poids devient trop lourd' (Roughly: 'An important message comes from the Holy Father .... The power of his holy sceptre grows too long'). In the Rullman libretto this is given as : 'Del Pastor sommo or giunse un alto messager ..... Ognor più grave omai divien suo scettro' but the Ricordi and Boosey scores set the following : 'Della tua sposa or giunse sdegnoso il genitor. Alcun gli fea già chiaro il mio pensiero' (or roughly : 'The indignant father of your wife has come. Already someone has revealed my intention to him').

This suggestion that Baldassare is the <u>father</u> of Alfonso's queen is at first sight puzzling, but the matter is restated in the Act II finale where 'repudier la Reine' becomes in the one version 'La Regina' (The Queen) but in the other 'La mia prole' (my child).

This apparent paradox of the head of the monastery of St. James being the father of the queen cannot be easily explained away by the attribution to him of <u>spiritual</u> paternity, and indeed in the Boosey edition of the opera the English translation makes clear this same father/daughter relationship. This is in accord with the strand of plot which formed the original <u>Leonora di Guzman</u> theme, and in which Baldassare was a lay figure and the

father of both Alfonso's wife <u>and</u> Fernando. This appears to have been transfered more-or-less intact into the 1842 Italian version for detailed consideration of the Ricordi libretto reinforces the view that this text is that of the original <u>Leonora di Guzman</u> translation. Not only is it liberally sprinkled with the words 'figlio' and 'padre' (far more so than the Rullman edition) but in Act III Baldassare himself uses the term 'genitor' to describe his own relationship with Fernando, and the whole tone of the Baldassare/Fernando scenes suggests a conventional father/son situation with the former seeming to be no more than a wealthy and extremely influential Spanish nobleman. His Monterone-like denunciation of Alfonso in the central acts does not conflict with this. Nevertheless, he is described in the libretto as 'Superiore di Convento di San Giusto', and the <u>tradition</u> of performance in Italy is in accord with this. It is a tortuous and involved story, which some detailed comparison of Jannetti's and Bassi's original translations for the Padua and Milan performances may well clarify. If, as seems certain, the censor-dogged Paduan production substituted non-religious characters and motives, then it surely performed a disservice to the composer whose imagination seems to have been most strongly fired by the monastery scenes, and particularly the last act.

There are inevitably felicities in the Italian translation (none more so than Baldassare's 'La perfidia' in his opening duet with Fernando, with its marvellous possibilities for expression), but in the final evaluation one feels that the more liquid Italian sounds alter the character of the work and make the characters themselves sound a little more conventional. To make this point is not necessarily to prefer the actual sound made by artists singing in French; rather does it mean that the characters as well as the melodies were created with a French audience in mind. The men particularly seem to be emasculated by the change of tongue, for although they never seem to be at odds with the melody, Fernando surely <u>sounds</u> less idealistic than does Fernand (compare the phrase 'Spirto gentil' with 'Ange si pur'- equally delicate perhaps, but not equally idealistic), and certainly the French language is better suited to conveying the irony which is a part of the character of Alphonse.

There are parts of the drama, too, where the original French gives a greater feeling of strength - as indeed it must for word endings can rarely be transferred from one language to another. 'Va - t'en, va - t'en, insensé téméraire !' sings Balthasar with great incisiveness, while the better known Italian 'Vanne dunque, frenetico, insano' has a softer sweep.

Compare too, Fernand's outburst after he has unknowingly married the King's mistress and been insulted by the courtiers - 'Ah, cet outrage, vous le payrez ! Il veut du sang, du sang !' as against 'Ebben, non più ! Gli atti perversi fian lavati col sangue !'. Such examples could be multiplied. Occasionally too, there is a directness about the original lacking in the translation - 'Je l'aime' declares Léonor when Alphonse confronts her with her letter to the unnamed Fernand; 'Un uom che adoro' sings her Italian counterpart, and again, in the last act Léonor begs 'Mon Dieu, Fernand, grâce' while Leonora is forced to resort to the less emotive 'Il tuo perdon io spero'. Sometimes, of course, the sonorities of the musical line are directly evoked by the original text (the marvellously set sound of 'Où la douleur s'endort' at the beginning of the last act for instance) and often the accentuation demanded by the music sounds just that little better in the original.

All this is simply to state the obvious - that a translation can never entirely capture the flavour or the impact of the original (although it may, of course, create other flavours and a differing impact). It must be said, though, that the Italian translations are good ones, are far from clumsy - opinions that the long tradition of Italian language performances confirms. Rarely does the Italian sound like a translation when heard in isolation, and it is not until the two are laid alongside one another that one sees the slight but appreciable superiority of the original in many places. Strangely, perhaps, one of the most awkward pieces of translation occurs at the opening of the recitative to Alphonse's famous aria; 'Jardins de l'Alcazar' flows from the tongue while 'Giardini dell'Alcazar' with its extra syllable is downright clumsy (the ungrammatical 'Giardini d'Alcazar' is sometimes found in print but rarely if ever sung on stage).

It is, perhaps, unlikely that La favorite will receive a major production in Britain although, bearing

in mind the example of La fille du régiment and the consideration that Léonor is a grateful role for a mezzo-soprano, it is certainly not impossible. Nonetheless, a plea should perhaps be made that any non-English language performance should be in the orginal French. That version has a great deal to offer and its claims have been largely ignored outside France and Belgium.

Three operas - three operas of Donizetti's prime, not all equally successful, but all of them containing pages of great beauty and effect. This brief survey has attempted to evaluate the French and Italian versions of these operas as they may be found in the theatre, and indeed as they have been published.

It does not purport to examine the composer's first thoughts in the light of what is revealed in the autographs; its aim is altogether more practical, and I hope that it may serve to indicate the viability of the original language versions in an operatic world too firmly orientated to the idea of Donizetti as a composer of purely Italian operas.

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Donizetti's own autobiography

Do you want an autobiography? Here it is:

* Born Bergamo at the end of November (1797).
* Composer.
* Pupil of the music school of the said town.
* First opera - Venice 1819.
* The last - God knows where.
* Up to the present I have composed 65 - together with church music, quartets, etc., etc.
* A friend of friends - who will always maintain that he is not concerned with popular opinion, fortune, himself or low matters.
* Widower for two years - sad by nature - not rich, but without desire for riches.

Paris, 8th June 1839