

QUEEN MARIA CRISTINA of SAVOY (1812-1836)

(First wife of King Ferdinand II)



# Maria Stuarda and the Neapolitan Censorship

## By Jeremy Commons

When Maria Stuarda was first revived this century, at Bergamo in 1958, we all read - and accepted - and repeated - the story that the opera had been banned in Naples in 1834, before ever the first performance took place, because the Queen of Naples fainted at the dress rehearsal. As I have already stated in the notes accompanying the recent Decca recording of the opera, I believe this account to be more romantic fiction than verifiable fact. But since publishing that account, and speaking on Maria Stuarda in part of a paper on 'Donizetti and the Neapolitan Censorship' delivered to the First International Donizetti Congress in Bergamo in September 1975, I have become increasingly eager to re-open the subject and look at the evidence afresh. For even though it marks a great advance on anything we may have known previously about the early history of the opera, it is perplexing evidence. Not all the documents that we would wish still survive, and those that do will admit of differing interpretations.

It must first be acknowledged that the story of the Queen's fainting is by no means of recent origin. It was already current in 1865, the year of the last 19th century production of the opera in Naples, and may be found in the columns of one of the Neapolitan newspapers of that date, L'Indipendente:

> ...The poet had rightly imitated Schiller as closely as possible, and the Bourbon censorship had inadvertently let pass the great scene of the confession, which, although disguised with great ability[1], was rendered conspicuous by the sublime notes of the composer and even more by the acting of the singers, and made such a powerful impression at the dress-rehearsal that Queen Cristina of Savoy, the first wife of Ferdinand II, who was present, fainted in her box. Delcarretto, the Minister of Police, prohibited the performance of the opera, and the officers

of the censorship were rigorously punished for allowing themselves to be deceived.[2]

There are perhaps as many as three inaccuracies in this account. In the first place, although Francesco Ruffa[3], one of the three Neapolitan censors at that date, seems to have verbally expressed his satisfaction with the libretto, he had never actually sanctioned it in writing. In the second place, it is highly unlikely that Queen Maria Cristina ever attended the dress rehearsal, or that, once there, she fainted. No contemporary account that has so far come to light mentions either occurrence. It is difficult to believe that such a sensational event as her fainting in public would have gone unrecorded at the time, and even her attendance at a dress rehearsal would have been such a remarkable departure from custom that one would expect to find it mentioned in Donizetti's letters and other contemporary documents. In the third place it is at least doubtful whether the decision to prohibit the opera was taken after, and as a result of, the dress rehearsal or anything that transpired there.

Even before we examine the evidence, we may affirm that the story, on its own merits, is unlikely. The presence of a member of the Royal Family in the opera house was a signal for great solemnity. It is unlikely that the Queen could have attended a rehearsal informally,and even more unlikely that a woman of Queen Maria Cristina's character would have wished to. Already known as 'the Saint' during her lifetime, she had with difficulty been persuaded to abandon her deep desire of becoming a nun, and induced to marry the young King Ferdinand instead. Even as Queen, she continued to spend several hours a day in prayer, and attended mass each morning and evening, generally accompanied by her husband. In the three short years she resided in Naples, for, married in November 1832, she died in January 1836, she is said to have turned the court into a nunnery: language was chastened, low-cut frocks went out of fashion, church attendances rose. In public her life was devoted to good works. And her attitude to the opera? In the words of Harold Acton, 'much as she disliked the theatre, the King obliged her to accompany him to the San Carlo now and then as her attendance gave pleasure to the public...To overcome her reluctance it was explained to her that in Naples "music was the profession of many and the delight of all, and that this art, one of the finest glories of the country, would certainly languish for lack of royal protection."'[4] Within the theatre her influence was exerted towards having ballet-dancers dress less scantily and move with less suggestiveness and lasciviousness. 'She roundly declared that she would renounce the theatre for ever unless [Ferdinand] put a prompt and vigorous stop to these serious inconveniences.'[5] It may well be that the moral tone of the censors' pronouncements at this period reflects her pervasive influence - that one could readily accept - but nothing about her suggests that she was the kind of woman who would willingly break with tradition and attend a dress rehearsal of her own volition.

Nothing that has been said so far, I am the first to realise, is of any value without explicit evidence. But I have, I hope, set the scene for the documents which follow.

Among many theatrical papers preserved in the State Archives of Naples there are a number dealing with this opera. They are to be found in two separate and totally distinct files: one, part of the papers of the 'Superintendent of Theatres and Spectacles' (Soprintendente de' Teatri e Spettacoli), dealing with 'Theatrical Censorship 1832-1837'[6]; the other a file of the Ministry of Police, dealing with operas and ballets presented at royal gala performances[7]. By arranging the more important documents from these two files in chronological order, we may construct a fascinating record of the vicissitudes which befell the opera.

The first letter of note, dated 19 July 1834, is that with which the Prince of Torella, President of the 'Company of Industry and Fine Arts' (Compagnia d'Industria e Belle Arti), the body which at this time acted as impresario of the Neapolitan Royal Theatres, originally submitted the libretto to the Deputy Superintendent of Theatres and Spectacles, with the request that it be passed to the censors for approval:

> I have the honour to foward you the libretto of the lyric tragedy Maria Stuarda which will be set to music expressly for Naples by Maestro Donizetti.

Since it is urgent that this opera be staged as soon as possible, I beg you to have the goodness to request superior approval for it most earnestly.[8]

Prince Dentice, the Deputy Superintendent, has duly annotated the letter at the side: 'Let [the libretto] be passed to the censorship.'

Just over a month later, during which time it is clear he had received no reply, Torella on 22 August addressed himself to Delcarretto, the Minister of Police:

I find myself in the necessity of importuning Your Excellency, bringing to your attention that some time ago the libretti of the operas and ballets which are noted in the margin were sent off by way of the Royal Superintendency so that the necessary approval might be obtained for them.

For the good operation of the Service of the Royal Theatres, it would be expedient for this Commission [i.e. the Company of Industry and Fine Arts] to know whether or not the Censorship encounters any difficulty with these libretti, since otherwise [the Service] cannot proceed with rehearsals and with orders for scenery and costumes, which [in turn] could put the performances in jeopardy.

I therefore warmly beg you to be so good as to give such orders as you see fit to the Censor responsible, for haste on his part....[9]

The first two titles of the five listed in the margin are Lucrezia Borgia[10] and Maria Stuarda.

Delcarretto's reply, dated 27 August, also contains passages of importance:

...the delay in the return of several libretti, which you draw my attention to, does not derive in any way from negligence, but from such considerations as the conditions of the times indeed require, since we are dealing with spectacles whose subjects could be considered under multiple aspects. You very well know the influence that these performances exercise on the public morale.

As regards the melodrama Lucrezia Borgia, tomorrow I shall be able to give you a definitive reply. As regards Maria Stuarda, I shall let you know in a few days what the position is.[11]



Omitting one document to which we shall return later, the last letter of note is one written on 7 September, after the prohibition had taken place. Addressed by Torella to the Prince of Ruffano, the Superintendent of Theatres and Spectacles, it reviews the whole unfortunate history. Long though it is, it deserves to be quoted in full:

Excellency,

In bringing to Your Excellency's notice the unexpected obstacle that has prevented the first performance of the drama Maria Stuarda, set to music by Maestro Donizetti, I consider it my duty to make known to you the following:

When Maestro Donizetti was engaged to compose an opera for the Royal Theatre of S. Carlo, he reserved to himself the choice of the libretto, which was to be written either by Romani of Milan, or by another poet, a Neapolitan, of [the composer's] choice. Lack of time and the noted scarcity of composers acceptable to this Public obliged the Commission [i.e. the Company of Industry and Fine Arts] to agree to such a demand. After the middle of July Maestro Donizetti delivered the drama Maria Stuarda, which was passed to your Royal Superintendency on the 19th of the same month for approval. The censor, Sig. Ruffa, was several times asked to make haste, and, when the most assiduous applications obtained no results, on the 22nd of last month I addressed a letter to His Excellency the Minister of Police, asking him to have the goodness to issue orders that various libretti and ballet-programmes, submitted long before, should be returned by the censor, Sig. Ruffa, with his approval. His Excellency, in a letter of the 27th of the same month, was pleased to say that he would make known how matters stood concerning Maria Stuarda within a few days.

In this state of expectancy I did not omit to renew my applications to the Censor, and in the meantime, in order that the Management might meet its various obligations, which were now pressing on account of the imminent Novena[12], rehearsals went ahead, the scenery was painted, and all the costumes were made. Finally on the morning of the

4th of this month Sig.Ruffa asked for the Author of the libretto Maria Stuarda, and, with his agreement, made not a few changes in it, which were immediately passed to Maestro Donizetti so that he might adapt the music, which he did immediately. Finally, after the dress rehearsal had taken place, and while the approval was awaited in order that the opera might be announced to the public, it was learned from the same Censor that the libretto as a whole could not be approved, even with the changes that had been made in it.

It would take too long to lay before Your Excellency the inconveniences and the loss stemming from the prohibition of such a work. The subscribers have a right to the new opera, and Your Excellency well knows how difficult it is this year to find composers to write new works. To this let it be added that, as a result of the serious illness of Tacchinardi[13], only Caterina di Guisa[14] can be presented, an opera which is not welcome to the Public, and which has provoked not insignificant disturbances of which Your Excellency is well aware.

In asking you, therefore, to have the goodness to take into consideration what is here set out, I add that, should the Censor require other alterations besides those already made, they will be carried out immediately, provided that the drama may be approved; - provided that the large expense may not be lost which has been laid out in preparing a spectacle which is awaited by the Public with such impatience, and which cannot be replaced, since Maestro Donizetti must depart for Milan, where he is engaged to write a new opera for Carnival; - and provided that the considerable loss already suffered by Our Society through the absence of performances not given hitherto may not be increased.

The President

[signed] The Prince of Torella.[15]

There is so much that is of interest here, with regard to both the censorship in general and Maria Stuarda in particular. In passing we may note Torella's concern at the scarcity of composers acceptable to the



public, and his implicit misgivings that Donizetti should have been allowed to reserve the right to choose both libretto and librettist; it was, of course, more usual at that period for the impresario to make the choice. Again in passing, it is noteworthy that although Donizetti himself seems to have been responsible for choosing the subject, the censor's consultations took place with the librettist, on this occasion the seventeen-year-old Giuseppe Bardari. If we link this with Donizetti's insistence, when Poliuto was prohibited four years later, that 'I am here for the music and not to guarantee the poetry to the authorities'[16], we may form some idea of his unwillingness to become personally involved in questions of censorship. Last but not least among these passing observations, we may note the intriguing reference to the 'not a few changes' which were actually made in the text and music of Maria Stuarda. If only we knew what they were!

But let us turn to the features of the letter which are most relevant to our present enquiry. What was the 'unexpected obstacle' which prevented the first performance? Right at the point where we most need enlightenment, Torella is at his most cryptic. Indeed it may not be going too far to suggest that he did not know himself, since, in a letter which spells out events in such detail, it seems reasonable to assume that, had he known more precisely, he would have said so. We do not even know in what form the news of the prohibition was received: was it in writing - in which case a document has here been lost - or was it by word of mouth?

When first I found Torella's letter, I assumed that the 'unexpected obstacle' referred to the Queen's presence and débâcle at the dress rehearsal, and remember feeling bitterly disappointed that neither here nor later in the letter should events of such importance have been spelt out more explicitly. Tact, I thought, had led Torella to suppress all direct reference to them. Now, on more mature reflection, I ask myself: may he not have omitted explicit mention simply because these events never occurred? It is stated, without further comment, that the dress rehearsal took place, which hardly seems to suggest that anything untoward occurred at it. Insofar as it was remarkable, we have evidence from Donizetti himself that it was for the

promise it gave of a resounding triumph to come. 'It caused a sensation', he wrote in a letter of 22 September[17].

Another point of interest about this memorandum is that, notwithstanding its detailed nature, it still does not establish for certain the date on which the dress rehearsal took place. It clearly must have been after the morning of 4 September, when Ruffa and Bardari agreed on the changes to be made in the text, and before 7 September, the date on which Torella wrote to Ruffano. The most probable time would seem to have been the evening of 6 September, for Donizetti, in a letter written on that day[18], was still able to say with confidence: 'On Saturday I go [on stage] at San Carlo with Maria Stuarda.' If this dating is correct, it would at least confirm one detail of the traditional account: that the news of the prohibition was received on the morrow of the dress rehearsal. It would also mean that Torella wrote his letter immediately, on that same day, in the white-hot heat of indignation.

Let us sum up at this stage what we have learned. We have a chronology that runs from the time the libretto was first submitted to the censorship until the time the opera was prohibited. And if we compare these documents with Donizetti's own statements contained in his letters, we have - from what is not said rather than from what is said - what seems to me a convincing case on which to assert the unlikelihood of the traditional story of the part played in the prohibition by the Queen. The legend arose, I believe, from rumours which raced round Naples at the time - rumours which, drawing on the Queen's known character and influence, jumped to the conclusion that she had been responsible. Donizetti himself speculated in this manner, suggesting at one moment that 'The King prohibited the performance because the Queen is descended from [Mary Queen of Scots]'[19], at another that 'The Queen does not like such sad subjects'[20]. But that such suggestions were speculation - and were recognised as such at the time - is shown conclusively by a letter which his close friend, Guglielmo (Guillaume) Cottrau, wrote on 18 September, only a fortnight after the prohibition. The relevant section reads:

> ...Donizetti's new opera is no longer being given, at least under its title of Maria Stuarda or even as Giovanna Gray ... These two subjects have just been placed on the index by the King in person. At first this rigour was attributed to a susceptibility of the Queen, of whom Mary Stuart was the ancestress twelfth back in line, neither more nor less than [she was of] the King through Marie-Louise of Savoy, wife of Philip V; but it is now maintained that it is only a corollary of a complete change of system...[21]



The legend may also have been fostered by a misinterpretation - or over-interpretation - of the words in which the Queen's suspected attitude and the dress rehearsal were undoubtedly described at the time: such words as 'susceptibility' and 'caused a sensation'.

We must also consider what we have not learned. The most obvious question we are left asking ourselves after reading Torella's letter is why Ruffa, after having demanded and obtained alterations in the text (and inevitably giving the impression that with these alterations the opera would meet with his approval), should suddenly have changed his mind and declared the entire libretto unacceptable. But did he? Both Donizetti and Cottrau confidently ascribe the prohibition to the King himself. If they are right, Ferdinand would seem to have stepped in (as he was again to do in 1838 regarding Poliuto), and to have taken the matter clean out of the censor's hands. Yet even as we seem to answer this question, another arises. What was the 'complete change of system' to which Cottrau refers?

There is, as I have already indicated, one more noteworthy document in the Neapolitan Archives which must be quoted. It is a confidential note of 4 September 1834, written by Monsignor Giuseppe Caprioli, the private secretary of the King, and addressed to Delcarretto :

> Excellency,
>
> I take the liberty of reminding you of what I indicated to you verbally last Monday concerning the two theatrical pieces: Lucrezia Borgia and Maria Stuart:
>
> I must then inform you that it is His Majesty's wish that upon gala court evenings in the Royal Theatres the presentation of operas and ballets of tragic argument should always be prohibited.

Upon His Majesty's order I enclose a Note of Individuals[22] in order that you may read it, and return it directly to the King when you have occasion to see him.

I am, with the greatest respect, Your Excellency's
Most humble and obliged servant,
Giuseppe Caprioli.
The Palace, 4 September 1834[23]

First of all, a word of explanation is necessary here. From the late 1820's onwards, the old style of opera seria plot which ends happily increasingly disappeared throughout Italy, in favour of more romantic plots with tragic endings. In the works of Donizetti, the change is manifested from Imelda de' Lambertazzi and Anna Bolena onwards, and the fact that he returned to the older style only once - for L'Assedio di Calais, significantly first performed in Naples at a royal gala - suggests that he found the new style more challenging and more rewarding. It is noteworthy that all his tragic operas, from Anna Bolena onwards, no matter what their overall quality, rise to their most deeply felt and expressive moments in their final tragic scenes. For an occasion as prestigious as a royal gala, he would naturally have wished to present a work of this kind. The King, on the other hand, judging from a strictly - and necessarily - political viewpoint in years when unrest was becoming increasingly difficult to control, was anxious to preserve a show of public cheerfulness, and understandably did not welcome the presentation of melancholy subjects when he visited the theatre. The question of whether tragic operas and ballets might be performed on gala evenings was at this time a point of some contention in Naples. The key-document on the question, a submission addressed to the King by Delcarretto, dates from three years earlier, 13 December 1831. There Delcarretto urged that royal galas, 'consecrated to public exultation... should be nourished with delightful spectacles in keeping with the sentiments of the spectators', warning that otherwise the occasions ran the danger of becoming 'evenings of sadness and boredom through the inevitably displeasing impression produced by performances which in no way correspond to their objective'[24]. In 1831 the King took note of Delcarretto's submission but took no action on it.



Only in 1834 does the ruling seem to have been vigorously enforced, for in May of this year Mercadante's I Normanni a Parigi (not a new work - it had first been performed in Turin in 1832) had to be revised and given a new, happy ending before it was approved. Now, some months later, the full force of the ruling seems to have fallen on Maria Stuarda. Across the top of Caprioli's note Delcarretto has written and initialled the instruction: 'Let what is indicated here be prescribed.' This, we may safely assume, was the 'complete change of system' referred to by Cottrau.

But we are still left with an important question unanswered. Even if the opera was unsuitable for gala presentation, why could it not be given at other, ordinary performances? Somehow we must try to reconcile Caprioli's note, which deals only with galas, with the fact that the opera, at least in its guise as Maria Stuarda, was refused any performance at all.

Since the available documents give us no assistance in solving this problem, we are from this point on inevitably and unashamedly in the realm of hypothesis.

It seems to me that there are two possible ways of interpreting Caprioli's note. We may either assume that the King availed himself of the ruling regarding gala performances as a pretext on which to base a total prohibition of the opera, or that the question of gala presentation in some way 'contaminated' - in some way became confused with - the strictly separate question of general performance.

Rather than complicate the picture beyond comprehension by exploring all the possibilities that arise from these alternatives, let me suggest what seems to me the most likely reconstruction of the events lying behind Caprioli's note. This account, fractionally more involved than that I offered in the Decca booklet or at Bergamo, may be right or may be wrong. But it does at least, I believe, try to take account of all the facts and problems as we know them.

Torella submits the libretto for approval on 19 July, and it is duly passed to Ruffa. Ruffa, as always, is overworked, and delays take place. But even more important, while he is being pressed for a reply, he learns that the opera has been submitted to the King for possible performance at a forthcoming gala. With

the difficulties concerning I Normanni a Parigi fresh in his mind, he decides to procrastinate still further and await the King's decision (concerning the gala) before delivering his own (concerning general performance). In view, however, of the importunity of Torella, he goes so far as to discuss changes with Bardari to make the libretto less provocative. Everyone jumps to the conclusion that approval is now a mere matter of course: Donizetti revises the music in accordance with Bardari's alterations, and the dress rehearsal takes place, probably on 6 September.

The King, meanwhile, is still considering the opera for possible gala presentation. His reaction is unfavourable (on one or all of a number of grounds: the confession scene, the confrontation of the queens, the execution of a crowned head, and the relationship of Mary Stuart to himself and the Queen). His decision is to suppress the work entirely. So, knowing the advanced stage of preparation it has reached, he issues a verbal order forbidding its performance at any time (which would explain the absence of any document actually announcing the prohibition), and through his secretary a less urgent written directive, dated 4 September, indicating the unsuitability of such operas as this and Lucrezia Borgia for gala occasions.

The verbal order filters down from the palace and eventually reaches Torella on 7 September. He is understandably unable to define the 'unexpected obstacle' that has given rise to the prohibition, and Donizetti and Cottrau, in turn, are lost in speculation. We may note that Donizetti, in one of his last comments on the subject, written on 7 October when he has had a whole month to reflect, is still unable to offer any precise explanation. 'Stuarda was prohibited,' he writes, 'Heavens knows why. It is enough that one must hold one's tongue, for the King commands it.'[25]

And what of the written order concerning gala performances? It is necessary that we follow this up, too, for there are two last, minor documents in the Neapolitan Archives that must, if possible, be made to fit in. The first is a mere minute, a note in a cramped hand, stating that 'The manuscripts of Borgia and Stuart have been returned to Sig. Ruffa. At the same time he has been informed of the sovereign wish that tragic works should not be performed on gala evenings.'[26] And the



disconcertingly late date of this minute is 12 September. The other document, of even later date - 24 September - is a further note from Caprioli to Delcarretto[27], approving Rossini's Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra, already in preparation[28] and significantly a serious opera with a happy ending, for performance at a still-unnamed gala. Was this for the same gala for which Maria Stuarda had been considered, or a later one? Unfortunately Delcarretto's side of the correspondence, which might have answered this question for us, is missing, so that it is impossible to be certain. Indeed this whole avenue of enquiry runs into a morass of further uncertainty, since although two galas were to take place before the end of the year,[29] Elisabetta was not given at either. At the first, the celebration of Queen Maria Cristina's birthday on 14 November, Bellini's Il Pirata was performed, together with a ballet, Tolomeo Evergete; at the second, the celebration of the Queen-Mother's name-day on 19 November, Rossini's Tancredi was given. The choice of Tancredi occasions no surprise, since it is a serious opera with a happy ending. Il Pirata, on the other hand, though less provocative than Maria Stuarda, is a tragic opera. Here we are faced with an inconsistency that was to recur with increasing frequency in subsequent years: sometimes the ruling on gala performances was enforced, sometimes tragic operas were allowed to slip by. As tragedy increasingly established itself as the accepted operatic form of the day, so it necessarily became more acceptable at galas. On the other hand we have the example of L'Assedio di Calais, a serious opera with a happy ending, which was virtually an anachronism at the time Donizetti composed it in 1836, and which, although not necessarily written with a gala in mind, was certainly given its first performance on just such an evening.

My suggested reconstruction of this last part of the story involves no departure from the facts given above, so may be stated in a few words. The written order, contained in Caprioli's note of 4 September, understandably takes longer to reach its destination and take effect than the verbal: it is not, in fact, passed to Ruffa until 12 September. Fortunately the gala in question - whichever it may have been - still lies two months away in the future, so that there is yet time to consider an alternative and come up with

Elisabetta, which in turn is eventually replaced by Il Pirata or Tancredi. Of the two possible galas in question, let us suppose that it was 14 November, Maria Cristina's birthday, for which Maria Stuarda was considered: immediately we have yet another possible reason why legend should have linked the Queen's name with the prohibition.[30]

One wonders whether any further documentation will ever come to light either to confirm or negate this reconstruction of events. If only the dead could speak, there are several characters among our dramatis personae who could reveal the truth, or at least contribute valuable testimony: the King, Caprioli, Delcarretto and Francesco Ruffa. But the King, for all that he liked to play a benevolent father-figure in public, was an autocratic monarch with no need to explain the reasons for his actions. And as for the others, unless private papers written by any of them should one day come to light, we must bow before proverbial truth and accept that 'Dead men tell no tales'.

NOTES

1. 'Disguised' in that Mary makes her confession ostensibly to a layman, Talbot; not as in the play to her major-domo, Andrew Melvil, who has taken holy orders with the specific aim of shriving her before her execution.
2. L'Indipendente, 22 April 1865.
3. Francesco Ruffa (1792-1851) was a literary figure of some note in Naples at this time. He was the author of several tragedies, including Teramene, Agave and Codro. In style these plays are still classical, but in the preface to the collected edition (Livorno, 1819) he gives an account of his childhood in Calabria which shows that he was potentially very much in sympathy with the new romanticism. He was, in fact, one of those authors who hovered between classicism and romanticism. He also enjoyed some reputation as a lyric poet, and wrote the words of a cantata, L'amor filiale, which was set to music by Zingarelli. On 21 December 1835 he delivered a noteworthy eulogy of Bellini to the Società Filarmonica Napolitana.
4. Harold Acton, The Last Bourbons of Naples (1825-1861)(London, 1961), p.75.
5. op.cit., p.75.
6. Teatri: Fascio 39.
7. Ministero della Polizia, Pandette del 1836. Espediente 521. Vol. 5. Parte 3.
8. Teatri: Fascio 39. Some indication of the urgency mentioned here - and the delays to which the opera was subjected - may be gained from a letter preserved at the Naples Conservatorium of Music , S. Pietro a Majella (catalogue no. 63813). In this the Prince of San Giorgio, the Administrator of the Company of Industry and Fine Arts, writing on 21 May 1834 in the absence of his President, informs Donizetti that he has heard from Alessandro Lanari, then Director of the Royal Theatres of Naples, that he - Donizetti - has already chosen the subject for his opera, Maria Stuarda, and found a poet (whom he does not name). The music, he insists, must be written in time for 15 August at the latest. Interestingly, he then goes on to enquire what fee Donizetti wishes paid to the poet, adding that since it is not Romani who has been engaged, he would hope that the sum would 'of course be very limited'.
9. Ministero della Polizia, Pandette del 1836. Esp. 521. Vol. 5. Parte 3.
10. Lucrezia Borgia, first produced on 26 December 1833 at La Scala, Milan, was submitted to the Neapolitan censorship on 31 May 1834. Like Maria Stuarda, it was prohibited, and though subsequently re-submitted in modified forms, each time with changed title and characters, it was not performed in Naples until 1848. Its subject was viewed with no little abhorrence on moral grounds, so that one wonders to what extent the coincidence of its being under consideration at the same time as Maria Stuarda 'contaminated' the chances of either opera's being approved. It will be noted that the two works are mentioned together in several of the documents quoted in this article.
11. Ministero della Polizia, Pandette del 1836. Esp. 521. Vol. 5 Parte 3.
12. A 'novena' is literally a nine-day period during which prayers are offered to a saint. I am indebted to William Ashbrook for pointing out to me that the reference here is to the Novena of S.

Gennaro, the patron saint of Naples, whose festival falls on 19 September (one of the two occasions in the year, the other being in May, when the famous 'liquefaction of the blood of S. Gennaro' occurs; on each occasion the miracle continues to take place for eight consecutive days). The festival was held in such awe that the theatres were closed during its duration. In a letter of 8 September 1831 (G. Zavadini, Donizetti: Vita - Musiche - Epistolario (Bergamo, 1948), letter no. 68, p.285) Donizetti speaks of 'eighteen days' silence', i.e. a double novena, or nine days leading up to 19 September, and a further nine days covering the festival itself and the days on which the miracle recurred. Since it was the practice for the theatres to spend this period rehearsing works intended for subsequent production, Torella was understandably anxious to know for certain, before its advent, whether or not Maria Stuarda met with official approval.

13. Fanny Tacchinardi-Persiani, the prima donna who a year later was to create the role of Lucia in Lucia di Lammermoor.
14. An opera by Carlo Coccia, first produced at La Scala, Milan, carnival 1833.
15. Teatri: Fascio 39.
16. G. Zavadini, Donizetti: Vita - Musiche - Epistolario (Bergamo, 1948), letter no.311, p. 486.
17. Studi Donizettiani 1: Contributo all'Epistolario di Gaetano Donizetti (Bergamo, 1962), letter no. 30, p.24.
18. op. cit., letter no. 29, p.24.
19. op. cit., letter no. 30, p.24.
20. op. cit., letter no. 31, p. 26.
21. Published in Lettres d'un Mélomane pour servir de document à l'histoire musicale de Naples de 1829 à 1847, avec une préface de F. Verdinois (Naples, 1885), p.28.
22. Although it is tempting to speculate that this 'Note of Individuals' may have had some reference to Maria Stuarda, there is no evidence to support such a supposition. Caprioli could well have been covering two unrelated topics in this one note.
23. and 24. Ministero della Polizia, Pandette del 1836 Esp. 521. Vol. 5. Parte 3.



25. Zavadini, op. cit., letter no. 150, p.361.
26. and 27. Ministero della Polizia, Pandette del 1836. Esp. 521. Vol. 5. Parte 3.
28. Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra was performed on 4 October.
29. I wish to express my gratitude to Don White for the information on galas in 1834 which enabled me to complete the last stages of this study.
30. It has been suggested to me that Caprioli's note may have been retrospective rather than prospective in its reference: that Maria Stuarda may have been under consideration for an earlier gala but was not ready in time. If this were so, the King would have been delivering his decision after the gala in question had come and gone.
Questions of dating make this theory unlikely. The two preceding galas were on 6 July, the Queen Mother's birthday (when Don Giovanni was given as Don Giovanni Tenorio) and on 24 July, the name-day of Queen Maria Cristina (when a ballet, Il Pirata, was performed). It is quite true that right back in April, when Donizetti was still hoping that he might obtain a libretto from Felice Romani, the opera was intended for performance on 6 July. See Zavadini, op.cit., letter no. 132, written to Ricordi on 15 April 1834: 'I renew the matter of Romani for the book for 6 July if he wishes it, and can do it...' But by the time Maria Stuarda had been decided upon as the subject and Bardari chosen as the librettist, there was no longer any question of performance by this date. See note 8 above, with its account of San Giorgio's letter of 21 May. That letter makes it clear that the Company of Industry and Fine Arts had only just learned - through Lanari - of the subject and librettist, and it is stated unequivocally that the opera should be written in time for 15 August at the latest. The libretto, moreover, was not submitted to the censors until 19 July, a fortnight after the Queen Mother's birthday and only five days before Queen Maria Cristina's name-day.
It therefore seems to me well-nigh impossible that Maria Stuarda - i.e. specifically this title and subject - could have been considered for performance at either of these earlier galas.