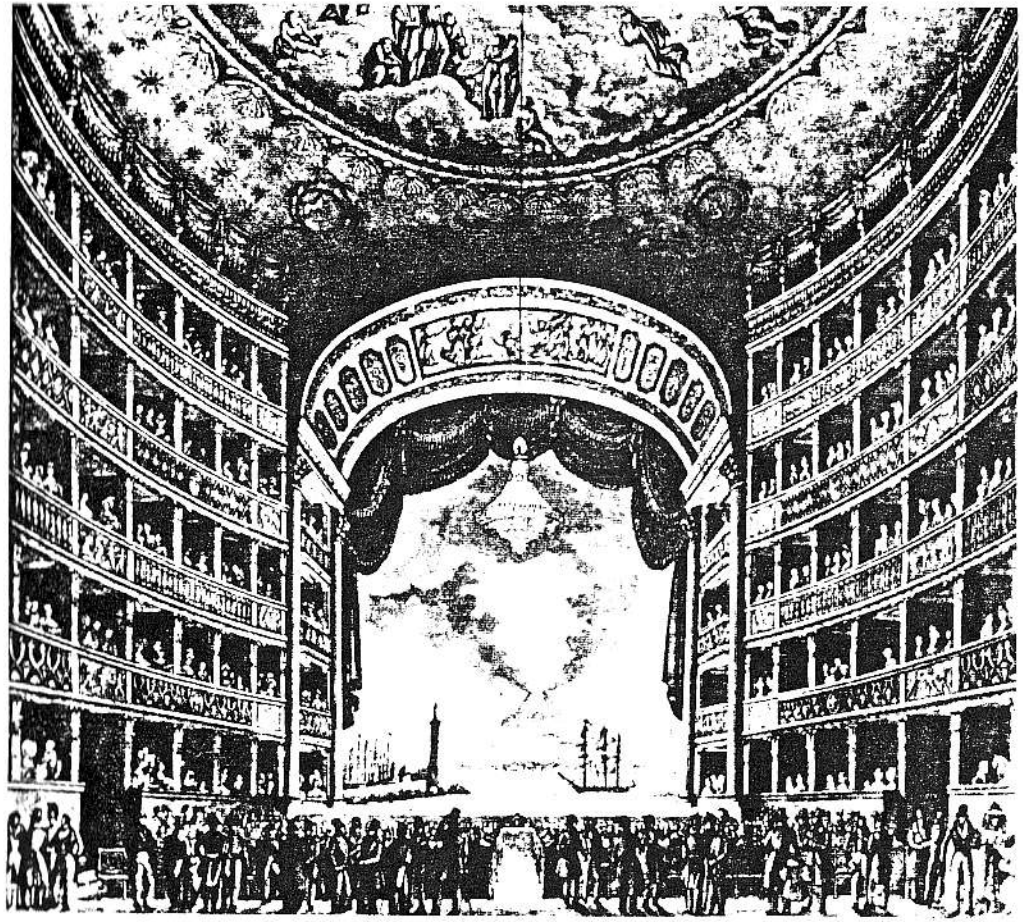
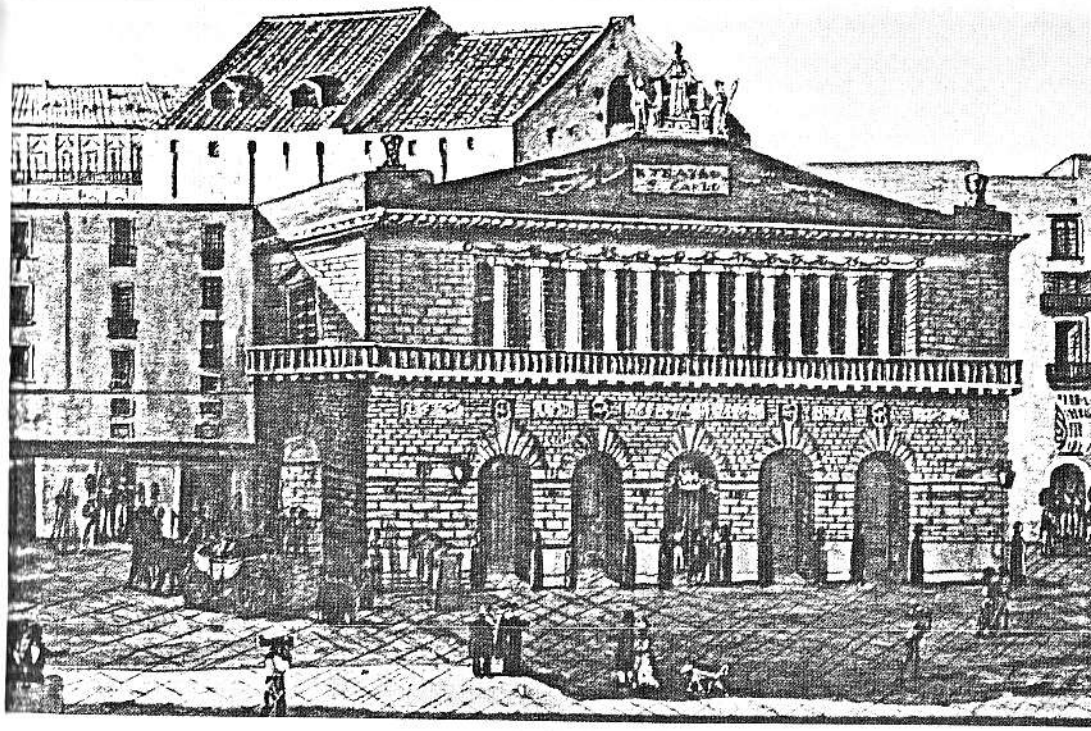


Il Teatro di S. Carlo, Naples.

Buondelmonte
Teatro di S. Carlo
18 - 10 - 1834



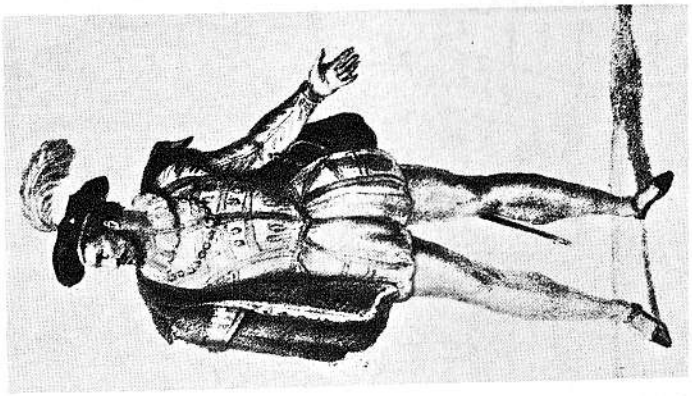
Il Teatro di S. Carlo, Naples.



Anna Del Sere
(Irene)



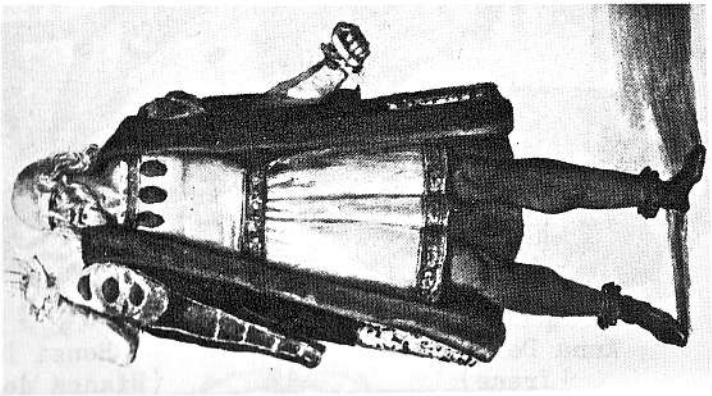
Ronzi De Begnis
(Bianca degl' Amidei)



Francesco Pedrazzi
(Buondelmonte)



Achille Balestracci
(Oderigo Fifanti)



Carlo Porto
(Tedaldo)

Buondelmonte and Maria Stuarda

By

Patric Schmid

1834 had started well for Donizetti. Lucrezia Borgia, which had been rapturously received at La Scala at its première on 26 December 1833, continued well into the season with 33 consecutive performances. Fausta had been a 'fortunate success' in Turin, in the composer's presence, and in Florence, on February 27, Rosmonda d'Inghilterra had pleased the notoriously difficult Florentine audience.

On April 12, Donizetti signed a contract with Prince Torrella in Naples, to compose a new opera for the San Carlo - and in the following months was also contracted to compose works for the opening of the 1834-35 Scala season, and for the Théâtre des Italiens, Paris. Librettos for all three operas were to be written by Felice Romani. As the months passed, however, and despite repeated pleas, Donizetti found himself in the position that had caused Bellini so many problems several years before-deadlines to meet and no texts. (The Scala and Paris Operas - Gemma di Vergy and Marino Faliero - were finally composed to texts by Bidera.)

The work for the San Carlo was to be Pelagio, but it soon became obvious that the libretto would not be ready in time, and Donizetti hoped that at least it could become the work that would open La Scala that December. With Pelagio temporarily shelved, the subject proposed by Romani was now Maria Stuarda. But on June 7, with only a month before the opera was to receive its first performance, Donizetti was writing to Ricordi: 'For pity's sake, dear, dear, Romani... where is Maria Stuarda?!'

Donizetti was forced to turn to Giuseppe Bardari to provide his text but already in May, Donizetti had realised that his opera would not be ready for performance in July, and it had been rescheduled for the end of the season which opened on May 30 with Mercadante's I Normanni a Parigi.

It was September before Maria Stuarda finally went into rehearsal; after the dress rehearsal it was prohibited and Donizetti was given the choice of having his music rearranged to a new subject by the Society, or of doing it himself.

He suggested refashioning it as Giovanna Gray, but writing to Innocenzo Giamperi on September 30, he explained that once again '...Her Majesty does not wish it; there shall be no more deaths on the stage. Finally though...excogitation...and a third attempt. We'll adapt it to Buondelmonte'.

It was not the first time Donizetti had considered the subject. In November 1833 a text for Buondelmonte (by Romani) had been promised, and never materialised. Finally, Donizetti had set Rosmonda d'Inghilterra - to a libretto previously set by Coccia.

Donizetti now had only five days in which to change his opera from Schiller's imagined meeting of two queens to the story of the Florentine who, breaking his promise to marry a daughter of the Amidei, began the battles of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. Bardari was not available, but Donizetti's Sicilian friend, Pietro Salatino, was on hand to revise the verses. Buondelmonte went into rehearsal on October 7, and received its first performance on October 18.

Ronzi De Begnis, who was to have been the first Mary (not Elizabeth 1, as chronicled by Florimo) was now Bianca degl'Amidei, and Anna Del Sere the Irene (Elizabeth). The other roles were taken by Pedrazzi - Buondelmonte (Leicester); Crespi - Lamberto (Cecil); Carlo Porto - Tedaldo (Talbot); Signora Salvetti - Eleonora dei Donati (Anna). There were also four additional roles - Teresa Zappucci - Giovanna; Natale - Mosca Lamberti; Achille Balestracci - Oderigo Fifanti; and Sparalik - Stiatta Uberti.

What nobody has spelled out is exactly how Maria Stuarda became Buondelmonte and, the following year, vice versa. How similar or different are they?

We can take as our basis the edition of Maria Stuarda that was published in 1866 by Cottrau in Naples and Gérard in Paris, following the 1865 San Carlo revival, and which is basically identical to the edition revived in 1958 at the Teatro Donizetti, and is the version regularly performed by Leyla Gencer, Montserrat Caballé and Beverly Sills.

I have allotted each of the pieces in the opera a key number A to S.

Act 1
A. Preludio
B. Coro di festa 'Qui s'attenda'
C. Cavatina d'Elisabetta 'Sì vuol di Francia il Rege'
D. Scena 'Fra voi perché non veggio Leicester?'
E. Cavatina di Leicester 'Ah! rimiro il bel sembiante'
F. Duetto d'Elisabetta e Leicester 'Era d'amor l'immagine'

Act 2
G. Cavatina di Maria 'Oh nube! che lieve per l'aria'
H. Duetto di Maria e Leicester 'Da tutti abbandonata'
I. Scena 'Qual loco è questo?'
J. Sextet 'È sempre la stessa'
K. Dialogo delle due Regine 'Morta al mondo'
L. Stretta-finale 'Va, preparati furente'

Act 3
M. Duettino d'Elisabetta e Cecil 'E pensi e tardi'
N. Terzetto d'Elisabetta, Leicester e Cecil 'Deh! per pietà'
O. Scena 'La perfida insultarmi'
P. Duetto della confessione 'Delle miei colpe lo squallido fantasma' - Maria, Talbot
Q. Inno della Morte 'Vedeste? Vedemmo!' coro
R. Preghiera degli Scozzese 'Io vi revedo alfin'-Maria
S. Aria del supplizio 'Oh colpo!' - Maria

The manuscript score of Buondelmonte - a section of which is in autograph - is in the Naples Conservatory. Eleven pieces were published by Ricordi in 1834 (adding another mystery, for the engravers catalogue in the Ricordi archives gives the start-work date for these pieces as 7 September 1834 - one month before the opera went into rehearsal and, presumably, several weeks before plans for Giovanna Gray had been shelved and Buondelmonte decided upon!)

Where the pieces correspond to the 1865 edition of Maria Stuarda, I have used the same key numbers. 'X' represents new music and recitatives.

Act 1
A. Preludio
X. Coro di congiunti 'In Firenze ei fè ritorno' (Not used in Maria Stuarda)

C. Cavatina d'Irene 'Sì; vien di gioja alfine'
X. Scena 'Amici, Buondelmonte'
E. Cavatina di Buondelmonte 'In te stesso chiedi al core'
I. Duetto di Buondelmonte ed Irene 'Se credi ch'empia sorte'
(This is the Maria/Leicester duet from Act 2 of Maria Stuarda, with Maria's music now allocated to Irene-Elisabetta.)
G. Cavatina di Bianca 'Deh! vieni, mio bene - ti chiama quest'alma'
(The second section of the cabaletta differs considerably from the Maria Stuarda 1865 version in both the melody and fioriture. The 1865 version has been greatly simplified.)
X. Coro 'Giuraste omai di rendervi'
(Not used in Maria Stuarda)
X. Scena 'Figli, più non mi resta'
J. Octet 'Terribile è questo'
K. Scena 'Io son Bianca'
(The 'Figlia impura di Bolena!' dialogue now becomes 'Tue non eri sì crudele...Hai quel vil reso infedele! Sia velen fra voi l'affetto; Da voi stessi maledetto...Seduttrice, il tradimento, Sangue, sangue chiamerà.')
L. Stretta-finale 'S'allontani quella stolta'

Act 2
M. Duettino d'Irene e Lamberto 'Non riede?...ei tarda!'
(Irene's music is in B♭ - in Maria Stuarda, E♭.)
N. Terzetto d'Irene, Buondelmonte e Lamberto 'Volle un ardente amore'
X. Scena 'O voi di parentado a me congiunti'
R. Quartetto 'Se in me dilegiusi' Oderigo, Mosca, Lamberto, Uberto e coro
(Maria's prayer becomes an ensemble for male voices)
X. Scena 'Pon mente a quel ch'io dico'
P. Duetto di Bianca e Tedaldo 'Ah tu ben sai quest' anima'
Q. Inno della Morte 'Qual giorno! Funesto!' coro
S. Aria di Bianca 'Ah! forse il misero'

Thus, we can see at a glance that the major changes are the loss of the Elisabeth/Leicester Act 1 duet, the opening chorus, and the transformation of Maria's prayer into an ensemble for male voices. Buondelmonte gives completely new recitatives and two new choruses.

Buondelmonte was well received by the Neapolitans, and during its run, Donizetti signed a new contract to provide Naples with three more operas...sensibly insisting upon the inclusion of a clause specifying that the approved libretto, passed by the censors, must be in his hands at least four months before the première of any production.

Maria Stuarda and Buondelmonte were forgotton until 16 December 1835, when Donizetti signed a contract with Visconti of La Scala to supervise the staging and conduct the rehearsals of a new production of Maria Stuarda for the 1835-6 Carnival season. For this he was to make in the score 'all those changes, improvements and other things which he conscientiously shall believe necessary and useful to this common enterprise's good outcome, and also a sinfonia'.

The first performance took place on 30 December 1835 with Maria Malibran as Mary Stuart. Alas, Malibran was ill, and sang only to collect her fee of 3,000 francs. The soprano, Sophia Schoberlechner, had declined to accept the 'minor' role of Elisabeth, and this was assigned to an inferior soprano, Giacinta Puzzi-Toso.

The censors objected to the Dialogo 'Vil bastarda...' and this was changed to 'Vil bugiarda...' (Liar).

The work was not well received by the public and played for only seven performances, although Act 1 (in which Maria does not appear) was given several times after that in a double bill.

Nine pieces of the 'Malibran' edition, and the Sinfonia, were published by Ricordi at this time. (The Dialogo delle due Regine was published by Ricordi only 30 years later - following the 1865 version).

Act 1
X. Sinfonia
(Using themes from the cabaletta of Maria's entrance aria.)
A. Preludio
B. Coro di festa 'Qui s'attenda'
C. Cavatina d'Elisabetta 'Sì vuol di Francia il Rege'
(One verse only)
D. Scena 'Fra voi perché non veggio Leicester'
E. Cavatina di Leicester 'Ah! rimiro il bel sembiante'
(amended recitative; the cabaletta differs but is a reworking of the same musical idea).

F. Duetto d'Elisabetta e Leicester 'Era d'amor l'immagine' (Amended recitatives: Elisabetta sings the same melody as Leicester)

Act 2

G. Cavatina di Maria 'Oh nube! che lieve per l'aria' (The second section of the cabeletta is the same as Bianca's cabaletta in Buondelmonte but with the fioriture altered for Malibran's unusual range)
H. Duetto di Maria e Leicester 'Ben io comprendo' (The change of words - from 'Da tutti abbandonata' has given rise of the belief that Donizetti wrote a new Maria/Leicester duet. However, apart from an amended recitative, the music is identical.)
I. Scena 'Qual loco è questo?'
J. Sextet 'È sempre la stessa'
K. Dialogo delle due Regine 'Morta al mondo'
L. Stretta-finale 'Va, preparati furente'

Act 3

M. Duettino d'Elisabetta e Cecil 'E pensi e tardi' (In E♭, as 1865 version)
N. Terezetto d'Elisabetta, Cecil e Leicester 'Deh! per pietà!'
O. Scena 'La perfida insultarmi'
P. Duetto della confessione 'Delle miei colpe lo squallido fantasma' - Maria, Talbot
Q. Inno della Morte 'Vedeste? Vedemmo!' coro
R. Preghiera degli Scozzese 'Io vi revedo alfin' - Maria
S. Aria del supplizio 'Oh colpo!' - Maria (A reworking of the same musical idea, to fit (Malibran's voice.)

One of the problems, 112 years later, is where the 1865 version originated. Where did the new words for the Maria/Leicester duet, and the second verse of Elisabetta's cavatina come from? The 1835 orchestration - possibly thought to be 'thin' by 1865 standards - has been somewhat filled out.

It is argued that the 1865 version is closest to Donizetti's original. However, as the autograph is lost, the only pieces of Maria Stuarda we know to have the composer's sanction are the ten pieces published by Ricordi in 1836, and these differ considerably from both Buondelmonte and the 1865 version. Until the autograph turns up, it is an argument that cannot be settled.

BUONDELMONTE

TRAGEDIA LIRICA

in due atti

DA RAPPRESENTARSI

NEL

REAL TEATRO DI S. CARLO

NELL' AUTUNNO DEL 1834.



NAPOLI,

Dalla Tipografia Flautina.

1834.