A Note on Maria Stuarda

By

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Although Maria Stuarda was born, like Mary Stuart herself, under a baleful star, it contains some of Donizetti's most intense musicodramatic pages. For Verdian theatrical force avant la lettre, few scenes equal the 'Dialogo delle due Regine' in Act II, in which, after a brief exchange in recitative, Mary kneels before Elizabeth and begins their confrontation: 'Morte al mondo.' But it is in the four concluding scenes of Act III -- the 'Gran Scena e Duetto della Confessione'(Oh! mio buon Talbot!), followed by the 'Inno della Morte'(Vedeste? Vedemmo), the 'Gran Scena e Preghiera'(Deh! Tu di un umile preghiera), and the 'Aria del Supplizio'(Di un cor che more) -- that Donizetti's extraordinary ability to capture the final majesty of transfigured suffering attains one of its most affecting climaxes. Here, in full command of that power, we encounter the man who had composed Anna Bolena four years earlier and who, one year later, would create Lucia di Lammermoor. Little wonder, then, that, nearly fourteen decades after its disguised premiere as Buondelmonte at Naples, Maria Stuarda has eluded the influence of that baneful star, to emerge as one of the great operas of its time and place.

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