L'ESULE DI ROMA —a performance history

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Considering the large number of Donizetti's serious operas that have been revived since the end of World War II, it is amazing that L'ESULE DI ROMA is not among them, especially in view of its relative success in the 19th century. It was Donizetti's first opera seria to have a performance history to speak of, in other words, more than just a few scattered productions, and the earliest (in terms of year of composition) to be performed in London. It has been possible to trace 60 confirmed productions in the 19th century, a number that compares favorably not only with established rarities such as CATERINA CORNARO and ROSMONDA D'INGHILTERRA (2 productions each), but also ADELIA (15 productions), PIA DE TOLOMEI (20 productions), MARIA STUARDA (23 productions), FAUSTA (44 productions), MARIA PADILLA (54 productions), and is only slightly less than MARIA DE RUDENZ (with 69 confirmed productions). Of course, 60 productions is not indicative of real success, since many operas of the period were staged hundreds of times, and a few literally thousands. However, the figures given above, not only for L'ESULE DI ROMA, but also for the other works cited for purposes of comparison, are not a true indication of how often each work was actually performed. This is because published "cronache" or annals exist for only a few opera houses, and general annals, such as Loewenberg (1) or Manferrari (2), only attempt to list country premieres of a given work. Both are inaccurate, and sometimes give conflicting dates. Manferrari lists a few sources, while Loewenberg lists none. The latter states in his preface that it would have been tedious and uninteresting to list all the productions of the works of Bellini, Verdi and Donizetti. He also made numerous errors both of commission and of omission, although only one of these applies to L'ESULE DI ROMA. He gives the Lisbon premiere as being on June 13, 1839,

while Manferrari gives it as being in April 1836. The latter is undoubtedly correct since Fonseca y Benevides (3) lists it as being in 1836. Manferrari probably obtained his information from an Italian theatrical journal which Loewenberg did not consult. Loewenberg further states that L'ESULE DI ROMA was given in Venice as SETTIMIO OSSIA L'ESULE DI ROMA in Spring 1831 whereas Manferrari gives the date as May 26 1832. This date is confirmed by Pavan (4), and is again likely to be the correct one for the production under the title of SETTIMIO, although it was given as L'ESULE DI ROMA at the Teatro San Samuele in the Spring of 1831. But Manferrari gives a performance in Mahon, on the island of Minorca, which is unconfirmed by the "cronache" for that city (5), and therefore questionable, and also omits stagings in Nice (given by Loewenberg) and Havana and Barcelona (both also omitted by Loewenberg).

It was therefore necessary to cast both Loewenberg and Manferrari aside and consult primary sources in order to obtain both the performance data for L'ESULE DI ROMA given below, as well as the figures for the other Donizetti operas cited above. Fortunately, many of the artists agencies of the period issued weekly or biweekly journals listing literally thousands of operatic performances both in and outside Italy. Some of the best of these include Teatri, Arti e Litteratura (available at the library of the American Institute for Verdi Studies in New York City), La Fama, Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Il Pirata and many others. Unfortunately, it was possible to consult only a few years of Il Pirata, and the coverage of these journals is much weaker for the late 1820's and the early 1830's when L'ESULE DI ROMA had most of its productions than it is for later years. Another major source of the dates and casts listed here is the Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung, published in Leipzig and also used by Loewenberg.

As stated before, it is very likely that there were many additional productions of L'ESULE DI ROMA, not only in Italy, but also in Spain, Russia and perhaps Latin America. Odessa in particular was an important centre of Italian opera during the period when L'ESULE enjoyed its greatest popularity, but the Italian journals of the

period only make passing references to the repertory there. In addition, Il Pirata in reporting the performance in Seville in the spring of 1838 makes reference to an earlier production there, but gives no further details. Since it was given in Cadiz in 1833, and the company that sang there invariably went to Seville for a few months that would seem to be the likeliest date for that particular staging.



				Argelia	Settimio	Murena
Jan	1 1828	Naples	San Carlo	Tosi	Winter	Lablache
July	12 1828	Milan	La Scala	Meric-Lalande	Winter	Lablache
Dec	27 1828	Naples	San Carlo	Tosi	Rubini	Lablache
Aug	2 1829	Naples	San Carlo	Tosi	Winter	Lablache
Carn	29-30	Zara***				
Apr	17 1831	Venice	San Samuele	Barile	Patri	Scalese
Nov	12 1831	Bologna	Comunale	Albini	Donzelli	Zuchelli
Feb	4 1832	London*	King's	De Meric	Winter	Mariani
Feb	11 1832	Macerata	Condomini	Zamboni	Cristofani	
May	21 1832	Madrid	Principe	Meric-Lalande	Pasini	Inchindi
May	26 1832	Venice	San Benedetto			
Aug	1 1832	Graz**				
Aug	1832	Udine		Spech	Genero?	
Sep	26 1832	Vienna**	Josephstadt			
Aut	1832	Zara	Nobile			
Oct	1832	Naples	San Carlo	Ronzi de Begnis		Lablache
Carn	32-33	Livorno	Avvalorati	Fanti	Mazza	Facchini
Jan	19 1833	Trieste	Grande	Biondi	Bonoldi	Salvatori
Apr	8 1833	Modena	Comunale	Schoberlechner	Zilioli	Marcolini
May	14 1833	Cadiz	Principal	Fischer	Piacenti	Moncada
Prim	1833	Ravenna		Schoberlechner	Zilioli	Marcolini
Sep	21 1833	Madrid	Principe	Palazzesi	Pasini	Bottelli
Aut	1833	Cagliari				
Nov	21 1833	Barcelona	Principal	Bonini	Verger	Badiali
Feb	1 1834	Naples	San Carlo			
Jan	20 1834	Ancona	Muse	Carnio	Gamberini	Federigo
Mar	1834	Fiume	Civico			
Prim	1834	Trieste	Grande	Riva?	Speck?	Giunte?
Aug	7 1834	Naples	San Carlo	Del Serre	Winter	Lablache
July	17 1834	Sinigaglia	Comunale	Garcia-Ruiz	Bonfigli	
Aug	1834	Lucca	Giglio	Garcia-Ruiz	Bonfigli	
Oct	7 1834	Trapani		Parisi		
Dec	26 1834	Perugia	Pavone	Menghini?	Arioli	Santarelli?
Sept	26 1835	Verona	Filarmonico	Strepponi	Tati	Cavaceppi
Apr	25 1835	Roma	Valle	Ferrarini	Speck	Leonardis
June	7 1835	Havana***	Principal	Varesi-Pedrotti	Montresor	Fornasari
Est	1835	Palermo	Carolino			
	1836	Lisbon****	Sao Carlo	Matthey	Furlani	Maggiorotti
Apr	1836	Savigliano		Schiasetti	Arigotti	Alberti

Aug	12 1836	Madrid	Principe	Oreiro de Lerma	Tati	Lei
Mar	1837	Prague**		Podhorsky	Demmer	Pock
Aug	1837	Crema	Sociale	Vittadini	Onomisto	
Carn	37-38	Ragusa	Nobile	Gottardi	Spongia	Mignani
Carn	37-38	Cagliari				
Prim	1838	Pavia	Condomini	Carnia	Fraschini	
Prim	1838	Seville				
Prim	1839	Pavia	Condomini	Dotti?	Fraschini	Rastelli?
June	13 1839	Lisbon	Sao Carlos		Patti	
Oct	29 1839	Codogno		Assandri	Pasini	Badiali
Dec	26? 39-40	Nice	Municipal	Berti-Gabussi	Arigotti	Paltrinieri
	1840	Cadiz	Principal	Villo		Lei
Aug	12 1840	Bergamo	Riccardi	Tadolini	Donzelli	Marini
June	1841	Trento	Sociale	Steyer	Winter	Guscetti
Aug	1841	Malta	Manoel	Gentili	Pardini	Leonardis
Aut	1841	Alessandria		Miciarelli-Sbriscia		
Jan	19 1842	Piacenza	Comunale	Boldrini	Pasini	Capitini
Carn	43-44	Sassari		Bruni	Pozzolini	Lolio
June	15 1844	Madrid	Circo	Gariboldi-Bassi	Unanue	Salvatori
Jan	1847	Saluzzo		Noble	Errani	Smitter
Prim	1854	Rio*****	Fluminense			
Sep	1869	Naples	Fondo	Noel-Guidi	Pancani	Toledo

* Tosi and Lablache took part in stagings of Act I later in the season
** In German
*** Not listed by Loewenberg
**** Manferrari suggests that the performance took place in April; Loewenberg does not list it
***** Listed by Manferrari, unconfirmed

REFERENCES CITED

(1) Loewenberg, Alfred — Annals of Opera, 2 Vols 2nd ed, Geneva 1955

(2) Manferrari, Umberto — Dizionario delle opere Melodrammatiche, 3 vols, Florence n. d.

(3) Fonseca y Benevides, Francisco da — O Real Theatro de S Carlos, Lisbon, 1883

(4) Pavan, Giuseppe — Teatri Musicali Veneziani, Venice 1916

(5) Mercadal Bagur, Deseado — 150 Anos de Arte Lirica y Dramatico en el coliseo de Mahon.