THE DONIZETTI SOCIETY

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The Donizetti Society: Editor Alexander Weatherson

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A CASA NATALE DI DONIZETTI

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Shakespeare ci ammonisce, per bocca di Re Lear, che l'uomo si distingue dall'animale per il fatto che ha bisogno del superfluo. Quando l'uomo primitivo pervenne a soddisfare i bisogni primari di sopravvivenza, avvertì la mancanza del superfluo e riuscì a inventarlo. Credo che sia stata questa la genesi della cultura sviluppatasi nei suoi vari aspetti e forme.

Oggi la cultura è per noi altrettanto indispensabile quanto l'aria che respiriamo e così come istintivamente respiriamo, altrettanto istintivamente consumiamo cultura. Parlare dell'esigenza di cultura a Bergamo, dove se ne produce da alcuni millenni, può sembrare pleonastico. Oltrettutto stiamo parlando di quella che è un'importantissima attività economica per questa città. Da ogni parte del mondo infatti accorre qui gente per visitare i musei, i monumenti, le biblioteche, le mostre, per convegni e raduni, per svariate manifestazioni, per eventi musicali e così via. Nella casa natale di Gaetano Donizetti limitiamoci a occuparci di cultura musicale, che è già un ambito sterminato e di inestimabile ricchezza.

La Donizetti Society di Londra, che qui rappresento trasmettendovi il cordiale saluto del Presidente, Alexander Weatherson, già da parecchi anni ha avviato un rapporto di fruttuosa collaborazione con la Fondazione Donizetti e il Teatro Donizetti. Alexander Weatherson è tra l'altro membro del Comitato scientifico delle Edizioni nazionali delle opere di Donizetti. La cultura donizettiana, per noi che la promuoviamo nel mondo, è fondamentale. L'anno venturo festeggeremo i 40 anni di esistenza della Donizetti Society. Ma in tutti questi anni non ci siamo concentrati su Donizetti solo ed esclusivo. I nostri amici della Deutsche Rossini Gesellschaft non si occupano che di Rossini, mentre la nostra visione è radicalmente diversa.

Non avrebbe senso limitare il nostro interesse a Donizetti, anzitutto perché non si può prescindere da Giovanni Simone Mayr, maestro e padre spirituale di Donizetti. Senza Mayr non saremmo oggi riuniti qui per onorare il suo celebre discepolo. Nella Donizetti Society consideriamo il vasto panorama del melodramma italiano dell'Ottocento come una sorta di *Giudizio universale* di Michelangelo nella Cappella Sistina. Ciascun personaggio e ciascun particolare sono importanti, poiché, come in un concertato, l'insieme contribuisce a formare il tutto. È così che i personaggi principali trovano in quelli secondari ed anche marginali la loro cassa di risonanza. Nel 2013 ricorreranno i bicentenari della nascita di Verdi e di Wagner, la cui presenza a livello esecutivo e di studi e ricerche è tale e tanta da non rendere necessaria, a dire il vero, alcuna celebrazione specifica. Ma di manifestazioni, convegni, seminari e tavole rotonde non ci sarà affatto penuria. Anche questo, se vogliamo, risponde al bisogno shakespeariano del superfluo!

Nel 2013 quasi nessuno, a parte un solitario cattedratico berlinese dell'Università di Monaco di Baviera, si preoccuperà invece di commemorare il bicentenario della nascita dell'ormai dimenticato Errico Petrella (Palermo 1813 - Genova 1877), operista fecondo e popolare tra la metà e la fine dell'Ottocento non solo in Italia. Con la sua popolarità anzi riuscì a un certo momento a infastidire Verdi, che non lo stimava per niente. Ecco: per la Donizetti Society il bicentenario di Petrella è, oso dire, più importante, perché più interessante e stimolante, di quelli dei suoi più illustri coetanei appena ricordati. Sono bizzarrerie britanniche? No. È sempre il discorso della Cappella Sistina. Chi legge le nostre *Newsletter* quadrimestrali - la prossima sarà la n. 116 - sa che, oltre a Donizetti e Mayr, e naturalmente oltre a Rossini, Bellini e Verdi, abbiamo di volta in volta prestato attenzione e dato spazio a Giovanni Pacini, Saverio Mercadante, Carlo Coccia, Nicola Vaccai, Luigi e Federico Ricci, Giuseppe Persiani, Alessandro Nini, Lauro Rossi, Giuseppe Apolloni, Antonio Cagnoni, Filippo Marchetti, nonché all'italobrasiliano Carlos Gomes, per limitarci a questi.

Il nostro auspicio è che il ricco e frastagliato patrimonio dell'Ottocento musicale italiano venga sempre più valorizzato e che questa magnifica tradizione non si impoverisca attorno a pochi nomi e a pochi titoli, sempre gli stessi. Grazie!

F.S.Lo P

OVERTURES AND BEGINNERS...

None of the composers listed below are *actually* beginners of course but only now are they beginning to emerge from a deafening silence of shameful neglect. Digital overtures were made to Józéf Poniatowski last year (see Newsletter 115), the next Polish operatic rediscovery is *Monbar, czyli flibustierowie,* a wonderful opera (his only opera) in three acts by Ignacy Feliks Dobrzynski (1807-1867). You may have a problem in pronouncing his name but you won't have a problem in appreciating his music! This work was composed in 1838 but not staged until 1865 in the interval soaking-up a lot of Verdi. From the brilliant overture onwards there is nothing but sheer enjoyment. The sub-Byronic plot is as unimaginable as the tortured libretto by Ludwik Paprocki but the performance under the baton of Lukasz Borowicz is incredibly electric and irresistible. The Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Polish Radio Choir together with splendidly committed singing combine to turn our ears eastwards to a musically fascinating Poland with a vengeance. A recording is promised.

The next welcome rediscovery is a little nearer home. Karel Miry (1828-1889) wrote *Charles Quint* in 1857. It too has a somewhat cumulative genesis and is equally impossible to resist. The author and musicologist René Seghers, on www.operanostalgia.be gives his succinct response to this magnificant re-appearance under the ægis of Lyrica Ghent:

"... it is a missed chance for the Belgian cultural landscape not to have made a broadcast. The press was wildly enthusiastic, so was the audience. Yes, it is a youth orchestra, but one conducted by Geert Soenen. I've seen him at work also during the rehearsals, of which we offer free excerpts on our website, and truly, he can't really be called a 'conductor'. He's more like...a wizard! I understand that broadcasting corporations like certainties such as the forces of The Munt, or internationally renowned opera houses. But John Boeren and Patrick Vlaeminck of Lyrica presented a cast that could have held its own on any stage. Of course, Denzil Delaere was a debuting tenor, but anyone that will hear his innate musicality and his gorgeous timbre, will be transported back to the days of Alain Vanzo. If he will continue to sing in this way... well, let me just say that I am proud to have had the honor of first publishing his voice. We made Delaere ***Divo of the Month*** *on the 401DutchDivas.nl website (where you can also find bios and sound/video samples of the other performers). Then there was Amaryllis Grégoire, who previously triumped at Lyrica Ghent in Auber's La muette de Portici. She rose up to the considerable challenge of Miry's writing for soprano, which combines bel canto agility with the extremes of dramatic and lyrical singing. Baritone Vincent Bertrand proved himself a wholly credible Charles V; baritone Laurent Kubla painted a warm portrait of the embittered and tormented steph-father Van Ghest, while bass Thomas Mürk had no trouble with the part of the conspirator, Padilla."*

Having noted that, we would like to add that even if Charles Quint may not be a wholly original work, in the sense that it has very audible influences of Auber, Meyerbeer and Verdi, it is, perhaps, indeed "the

best opera that Auber and Meyerbeer never wrote. It is definitely a treasure trove, and as such an outstanding example of Flemish operatic art. From the first till the last note, it presents a string of one gorgeous melodies after another, constantly shifting between brilliant aubades, monologues, arias, passionate duets and dramatic ensembles. To which one should add that the chorus has a part that is as important and beautiful as it is in, say, La forza del destino. 29 April 2012

401DutchOperas.com offers an MP3 download of *Charles Quint* [libretto by H.van Peene] at a very modest price, but also filmed highlights of the production. All the more essential since this excellent performance did not appear on local Radio or television!]

An incredible prospect for the rediscovery of German Romantic Opera is unveiled by the publisher and IT expert Volker Tosta whose edition of Franz Lachner's celebrated *Catharina Cornaro* is due to be broadcast by Bayerischer Rundfunk next October (see Diary). In a letter Mr Tosta outlines the reserve of forgotten music:

"*There are about 3000 works that have been written and have been performed in that time period but only 20 of them are still regularly performed (10 of them by the same composer). So there is truly a vast field that can be explored and the work is necessary to enable modern performances because almost all the scores are hand-written and parts do not exist any more*". His next opera will probably be Flotow's *Rübezahl* and he is currently working on pieces from Lindpaintner's *Die sizilianische Vesper* (written about 10 years before Verdi but not based on the Scribe livret - indeed from a totally different source - but beginning with a Drinking Chorus and ending with a Riot Scene as you would expect (the libretto is by Herbert Rau as Mr Tosta tells us). Here is real treasure to come. We can't wait.

Finally, there emerges one of the key issues of Nineteenth Century Italian Music. In the 1860's to Verdi's fury he was challenged by the immense popularity of the operas of **Errico Petrella**. Many remember the vivid revival of *Jone* at Caracas in 1981 which was a revelation. Next year is the Bicentenary of Petrella and suitable homage will be paid to this deliberately deleted operatic master whose willingness to stoop to conquer proved his undoing both with a tight-lipped critical *gratin* and with the vicious commercial stranglehold in his newly-united Italy. The apocalyptic *Jone* of 1981 was inseparable from its heroine – the splendid Italo-Argentinian diva **Adelaide Negri**. We publish on the following pages an interview with the famous soprano, prefaced by a photo of the assembled group of those responsible for *Jone* at Caracas. It includes a rare appearance of Rubino Profeta who – like Madame Negri – is one of the key figures in our world of enchanted rediscovery:

Edit

[Left to right page 7: the Impresario Alfredo Strada, Adelaide Negri (Jone), Gustavo Tambasco (regisseur), Stella Silvia (Nidia), the conductor Edoardo Muller, the musicologist Rubino Profeta, the scenographer Martin López and Bernado Toscano]

JONE de Petrella -

REPORTAJE A ADELAIDA NEGRI

En una tarde ya friolenta del otoño porteño, visitamos a Adelaida Negri en su gratísima "Casa de la Ópera de Buenos Aires", instalada en Barracas, en un barrio de la gran urbe al mismo tiempo céntrico y apartado. En sus años juveniles fue la casa paterna; hoy Adelaida la ha convertido en un "salotto" musical al estilo de los de Milán 1900, aunque en un ámbito de decoración más actual, presidido por el piano de cola, y en cuyas paredes pueden verse numerosas fotografías de sus actuaciones internacionales, y junto a ilustres colegas como Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo, Franco Corelli, Sherril Milnes, Juan Pons, Fiorenza Cossotto, etc.

Allí los días lunes suele haber recitales (generalmente de óperas semi escenificadas) de los jóvenes cantantes que la soprano suele auspiciar, cordial y hospitalaria. También allí ha recibido tanto a un músico del renombre universal de Gian Carlo Menotti como a jóvenes músicos que llegaron desde la tierra de Licinio Refice (Giovanni Panella y Giovanni Valle) para hacer conocer su obra, en otra clara demostración del permanente vínculo de sangre y espíritu entre Italia y la Argentina.

Nosotros fuimos con un objetivo preciso: recabar sus recuerdos de cuando en 1981 Adelaida protagonizó en Venezuela la única reposición en las últimas décadas – que nos conste - de *"Ione"* de Errico Petrella, con motivo de las celebraciones del centenario del Teatro Municipal de Caracas, que la había brindado en su temporada inaugural de 1881. Asidua cantante de óperas poco frecuentadas, (Saffo de Pacini, La Vestale y Fernando Cortez de Spontini) ya el año anterior había cantado en ese teatro la *"Semiramide"* rossiniana y en la temporada que nos ocupa "La Africana" de Meyerbeer.

Recuerda que con "Ione" se presentó un serio problema: no se contaba con la partitura orquestal, por lo que el empresario Alfredo Strada debió recurrir al prestigioso compositor y musicólogo napolitano Rubino Profeta (1910-1985), director artístico del Teatro de San Carlo de Nápoli entre 1972 y 74, que pudo trabajar sobre una partitura manuscrita no autógrafa de Ione, que se conservaba en la Biblioteca del Conservatorio de San Pietro a Majella del que en ese momento R. Profeta era profesor (y donde Petrella había sido alumno frustrado más de un siglo y medio atrás).



Profeta, gran especialista en estas revisiones de partituras del primo Ottocento (entre otras, trabajó en varias de Donizetti, como *Roberto Devereux*, *Belisario*, *Caterina Cornaro*, *Gemma di Vergy* y *Diluvio Universale*), no sólo hizo su delicada tarea en Italia sino que acudió a Venezuela para brindar personalmente los ajustes necesarios, además de sus conocimientos y anécdotas a quienes abordarían esta exhumación. Adelaida recuerda que Profeta solía contar que *"Ione"* había tenido fama en Sicilia de *"ópera de ietattura"* por su popular marcha fúnebre que solía ejecutarse en los funerales de miembros de la maffia. ¡Claro que también se la solía ejecutar en una adaptación para la Semana Santa en toda España! Entretanto, los cantantes estudiaban la partitura revisada en Milán, a veces en un camarín de la Scala, con el Mtro. Edoardo Muller, encargado de la dirección orquestal.

También recuerda que hubo dificultades para su puesta en escena, por su espectacular final con la erupción del Vesubio y la fuga de los protagonistas hacia el mar. El régisseur Gustavo Tambascio ideó la decoración de las escenas de interiores con reproducciones de los frescos pompeyanos, y en las exteriores se vislumbraba la amenazante silueta del Vesubio. Algunos figurantes con máscaras deambulaban burlándose de las pasiones de los protagonistas mientras ellos luchaban con sus partes no precisamente fáciles. El coro fue dispuesto en gradas a ambos lados del escenario como si fueran espectadores contemporáneos de Petrella.

Adelaida recuerda el gran éxito obtenido junto con Giampiero Mastromei en el dúo central de Ione y Arbace del segundo acto, con una gran ovación a telón abierto. Pero ese éxito no se trasladó a la crítica, que no reconoció el loable esfuerzo de la reposición. Algunos arremetieron contra la ópera indefensa, hablando de "un plesiosaurio mohoso con lo peor de los lugares comunes del género", y uno de ellos (Oscar Mago) dijo incomprensiblemente que "el aburrimiento no dejó de embargarnos desde el principio, y – lo confesamos – nos ausentamos antes del final… a pesar de las bellísimas melodías y del excepcional trato de la voz humana, propio de un gran maestro" (sic). ¿Qué más quería de *Ione*? Ese es un verdadero arcano a desentrañar…

José Luis Sáenz



MADAME STOLTZ RECONSIDERED

"*Riveduta*" maybe?

That their relations began badly, and ended worse, we all know, but there was hope even for Rosine Stoltz. Or so it would seem. After Donizetti had pronounced in 1840 that the key role of Hélène in *Le Duc d'Albe* was in no way suitable for her voice, there was a seismic shift worthy of any operatic Richter scale. His views momentarily turned upside down in nothing less than a monstrous *U turn*. Moreover, from the evidence of his letters we find that this was not the only opera he was ready to tailor to her perfectly unbearable gifts. She was a mezzo-soprano of great vocal ability, beautiful and talented and had a remarkable scenic allure. All these things, Donizetti was ready to concede. In every other respect she was detestable.

The change of tack is truly extraordinary. At the end of December 1841 [i] he could be writing to Michele Accursi "*Non far perdio che io entri in un imbroglio con dar la parte alla Stoltz – Nò, per dio, la musica fatta non ci sta, ed io non voglio sagrificar un'opera pel gusto di essere agreable a Mad.me.*"

But the wind was to change: only four weeks later, at the end of January 1842, he would be dashing off anew to Accursi in his breathless mixture of Italian and French [ii] "*Anch'io son d'avviso che nel Duca d'Alba vi è qualche modificazione a fare, un po' meno potente la cospirazione, un poco più caldo l'amore; del resto io avrei immaginato dover riuscire di grand'effetto: avevo sopra tutto carezzato il rôle della donna; rôle nuovo forse in teatro, rôle di azione, mentre quasi sempre la donna è passiva. Qui, giovane entusiasta, amante, una Giovanna d'Arco. E io imaginava che Mad.Stoltz vi sarebbe stata ammirabile, perchè vi sono molte e molte situazioni che mi sembrano avermi ispirato, e son certo che più bel rôle di donna e più nuovo non l'ho mai avuto. Infine che un uomo odiato da tutti, da tutti fuggito, a cui non rimane che una sola esperanza, un solo affetto, l'amor del figlio che deve consolarlo etc etc., discenda fino alla bassezza per sentirsi chiamar Padre, mi pare teatrale e drammatico. Le nom de Père dans la bouche de son fils, pour lui c'est une consolation nouvelle, c'est la preuve que le cœur lui reviendra aussi; del resto ne parleremo con Pillet e Scribe e decideremo.*" Without a pause adding the following lines to this unprecedented *volte face: "La Stoltz nel rôle di Antonina era Madre ma madre giovane che ispira amore; se non lo vuole prenda il simpatico rôle di Irene, a cui si adatta la nuova aria, che ho fatto per lei – bien."*

"*Ispira amore*"? Two big blows in succession. The second of these statements is not entirely out of the blue, we are well aware from earlier letters that *Belisario* had been mooted for Paris but in 1842 and with Rosine Stoltz in the role of Antonina? Or, even more improbably, with her singing the role of Irene and being supplied with a new aria! We know that Mechetti in Vienna published a Scena e cavatina 'Spari dagli occhi il pianto' by Mercadante for insertion into *Belisario* but this is going even further into the realms of fantasy. Has this "nuova aria" for Irene/Stoltz survived? Did Donizetti intend that his 1836 masterpiece should appear at the Opéra? In *French*?



Rosine Stoltz née Victorine Noeb (1815-1903)

Belisario in fact surfaced in Paris at the Théâtre-Italien on 24 October 1843 with Giulia Grisi as Antonina. And we do know that in the libretto for the first staging of *Belisario* at Her Majesty's Theatre in London later in 1843 when the role of Irene was sung by Fanny Tachinardi-Persiani (far-more celebrated a Donizettian diva

than Rosine Stoltz[iii] and a casting which *might* have included new music of this importance) that nothing of the sort is included in the printed text. But in many of the published libretti there is in Parte III Sc.VI a narration [iv] for Irene responding to Giustiniano and Antonina's questioning and recounting in detail Belisario's triumph - beginning 'La china d'erto colle, che sovrasta al campo'- a discursive piece which *could* have been set or reset - and then too there is her cavatina in the *Introduzione* which *could* have been given new music while retaining its original text. Both of which items might have been describable as a "nuova aria". But this is pure conjecture.

As for *Le Duc d'Albe*. So he had changed his mind about this fabled sacred monster of the Académie royale de Musique? This *maitresse-femme* ("Rosy" she called herself) with its inert director and lover - the complaisant Léon Pillet she so triumphantly led on a leash. An opera with "*qualche modificazione*" and with La Stoltz in the guise of a Joan of Arc? Incredible. That *Le Duc d'Albe* still remained in orbit is in itself somewhat baffling in view of the timetable. True, Charles de Boigne gives the following list of works on his desk for 1842-43: [v]

Dom Sébastien
Caterina Cornaro
Maria di Rohan
Don Pasquale
Gabrielle de Vergi
La Duc d'Albe
Una Farza inedita

and as these were in the recollection of a "*compagnon de riz au lait*" we must take them seriously, but that Rosy was capable of "*più caldo l'amore*" and "*entusiasta*" is even less credible than that of the "*rôle de azione*" she was here allotted. As for her being a source of inspiration for the "*più bel rôle di donna e più nuovo non l'ho mai avuto*" this is truly amazing! Can it be possible, do you think, that he had - if very briefly - fallen for this well-turned ankle? He favoured mezzo-sopranos as we have learned to know. Did he actually ask Scribe for changes to the libretto? Or ask Pillet for "*modificazione*" of any kind whatsoever. [vi] This we may never be able to decide.

Alexander Weatherson

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[i] *Studi Donizettiani* 1 (Bergamo 1962), Letter 85, 74
[ii] op cit Letter 88, 80
[iii] Antonina in this London edition was sung by Adelaide Moltini
[iv] In "*virgolati*" in the prima edition of the opera and often cut in revivals but it was sung - according to printed sources - at Firenze in 1840-41 (the "nuova aria"?)
[v] Charles de Boigne *Petits mémoires de l'opéra* (Paris 1857), 207
[vi] There are no detectable alterations of this kind to the autograph score

I Donizetti e la "*Giovine Italia*"
(Zio e nipote)

Lo zio

Forse non sapremo mai quale fu il vero rapporto che intercorse tra le istanze risorgimentali (di unità d'Italia, indipendenza dallo straniero, etc.) e l'esperienza artistica e personale di Gaetano Donizetti; tra quest'ultimo e Giuseppe Mazzini ovvero la sua propaggine ideologica che fu la «Giovine Italia»[1]. Molto probabilmente il compositore e il pensatore – rivoluzionario non si conobbero mai personalmente ma, sia dalle ricerche storiche più accreditate (l'occasione delle recenti celebrazioni per il 150° dell'Unità d'Italia ne hanno dato buon risalto[2]), sia tra le righe delle pubblicazioni di scritti ed epistolari si evince un rapporto indiretto molto particolare.
Intanto l'agente di Donizetti a Parigi, Michele Accursi, era un esule italiano, sedicente mazziniano (ma probabile spia per conto dello Stato Pontificio). Giovanni Ruffini, mazziniano di ferro (ma la "ferrea" confessione mazziniana si arrugginirà alle brume londinesi - al pari del fratello Agostino) fu librettista e traduttore donizettiano.
Tacendo della predilezione che Giuseppe Mazzini ebbe verso la musica di Donizetti. Aldilà della robusta citazione nella *Filosofia della musica* (1836) del rivoluzionario genovese, la speranza di Mazzini nella musica di Donizetti quale punto di «convergenza di sentimenti di identità nazionale» (Ashbrook) risultò evidente solo in alcune occasioni indipendenti dalla volontà del compositore bergamasco, ma significative di quei cambiamenti (utilizzo dei cori, cifre melodiche specifiche e esclusive) che tratteggeranno il solco che percorrerà la musica del giovane Giuseppe Verdi.
Per quel che concerne Donizetti è risaputo che si mantenne sempre lontano dai fatti politico-rivoluzionari di quegli anni. Famosa è la sua lettera al padre nella quale, alle preoccupazioni del genitore, dopo che Gregorio XVI aveva fatto reprimere a fucilate i moti degli affiliati mazziniani, così risponde: «Io sono uomo che di poche cose s'inquieta, anzi di una sola, cioè se l'opera mia va male. Del resto non mi curo».
Ciononostante, l'indirizzo donizettiano a Parigi (dopo il 1838) fu punto di riferimento per tutta la corrispondenza mazziniana europea.
Chiaro è quanto traspare nel *Protocollo della Giovine Italia* in una lettera di Giuseppe Lamberti, segretario della «Giovine Italia», a Mazzini (per qualche adepto londinese) in data 30 gennaio 1844:

> Invii lettera a M.r G[aeta]*no* Doniz[ett]i, Maître de Chapelle de Sa Majesté Apostolique l'Empereur d'Autriche. Quel *no* nel G[aetano] indicherà a Michele, ricevente, che son per noi[3].

Altre indicazioni seguirono a questa, come si evince dalla lettera scritta da Lamberti a Nicola Fabrizi, a Malta, in data 29 agosto 1844: «scriva all'indirizzo Doniz[etti], 19, Paris, etc. Se cose importanti, in limone[4] fra linee, e sopra "stimatissimo": farò così io pure, e così faccia Emilio [Sceberras]».[5]
È molto probabile che Donizetti non conoscesse le tresche mazziniane legate al suo indirizzo parigino, foraggiate da Michele Accursi (la corrispondenza di uno dei più temuti rivoluzionari dell'Ottocento presso la casa del Maestro di cappella dell'imperatore d'Austria!) difatti in una lettera del 12 agosto 1845, Giuseppe Lamberti, ad Emilio Sceberras, scrive: «Non si serva più indirizzo Doniz [etti]. È qui»[6].
Certo, qualche esortazione a non approfittare troppo della situazione traspare qua e là nell'epistolario. In una lettera spedita a Nicola Fabrizi, il 9 aprile 1845, la raccomandazione è «Si serva parcamente indirizzo Doniz[etti]».
Nell'ambiente mazziniano di quegli anni si voleva che Donizetti musicasse un libretto di Tommaso Zauli Sajani[7]. La prima traccia sta in una lettera di Emilio Sceberras (Malta, 15 febbraio 1845):

> Sajani ha scritto libro per Doniz[etti] (tragedia); presentarglielo per mezzo d'Accursi: avrebbe voluto esentarsi, ma nol poté. – Il lavoro è superiore agli altri, e non bisogna confonderlo cogli altri libretti. - Lo invia col mezzo d'ufficiale inglese, allievo di Sajani, che vien qui [8].

In risposta a questa, in una lettera del 7 marzo 1845 (da Parigi) si legge: «Doniz[etti] non è qui, né verrà. – Ha suo poeta Gio[vanni] Ruf [fini] che gli rattoppa libri ».
L' 8 aprile 1845 un'altra lettera informa (sempre da Parigi e sempre per Sceberras): «[...] Pel libro Sajani [...] – Dica se vuol gli si rimandi, se vuol si tenti a Vienna, o se si deve aspettar che Don[izetti] venga qui: lo darei allora ad Acc[ursi]».
Ma già in un'altra missiva del 25 giugno, sempre di Lamberti, si legge: «S'aspetta il Doniz[zetti], cui presenterò il libretto Sajani». Finalmente, in agosto, si riesce a dare il libretto a Donizetti, così si scrive a Sceberras (13 agosto): « [...] Unisco manoscritto Sajani, del dramma. – Doniz[etti] lo trovò buono, ma non potrebbe servirsene senza cambiamenti grandi. Ora poi non vuol far di quel genere ed è malato». L'argomento del libretto di Sajani occupa ancora la corrispondenza (16 marzo 1846) tra Lamberti e Carlo Fabrizi con preghiera di dire a Emilio Sceberras di far sapere «a Saj[ani], che non potei più riaver manoscritto sua opera per Doniz[etti], il quale perdé la testa e parti per guarire[9]». Due mesi dopo (16 maggio 1846), ancora Lamberti in una lettera per Sceberras annota: «Dica a Saj[ani] che do il dramma a Nic[ola Fabrizi]. Doniz[etti] è perduto[10]».

Il nipote

Quando la malattia di Donizetti si fece ingestibile, giunse da Costantinopoli il nipote Andrea, figlio del fratello Giuseppe.
Il fatto che proprio Andrea Donizetti appaia citato più volte nel *Protocollo della Giovine Italia*, ci porta a riflettere sul recente ritrovamento di tre copie dell'inno «Fratelli d'Italia», di cui una firmata da Goffredo Mameli, tra i documenti della Donazione di Giuseppe Donizetti della Biblioteca San Pietro a Majella di Napoli[11]. Ritrovamento che potrebbe aprire il tema, mai completamente svolto, tra Donizetti e il Risorgimento e che vede il nipote Andrea latore (suo malgrado?) di somme di denaro e lettere tra Costantinopoli e Parigi per conto della «Giovine Italia».
Andrea Donizetti arrivò a Parigi (per accertarsi delle vere condizioni di salute dello zio Gaetano) il 25 dicembre del 1845 (era partito da Costantinopoli il 13 novembre: ben 42 giorni di viaggio! Aggiungendone altri 38 poteva fare agevolmente il giro del mondo: Verne insegna!). Non volendo o non essendo in grado di gestire la malattia mentale dello zio, lo lasciò rinchiudere nella clinica per alienati d' Ivry il 1 febbraio 1846 (dalla quale uscirà il 19 settembre 1847, per morire a Bergamo l'8 aprile 1848). Questo fatto provocò un nugolo di polemiche, soprattutto quando il malato venne abbandonato a se stesso in quanto Andrea ripartì per Costantinopoli il 7 settembre 1846. Dalle proteste che gli amici di Donizetti indirizzarono presso il fratello Giuseppe, a Costantinopoli, Andrea fu nuovamente mandato a Parigi. Vi arriverà il 23 aprile 1847, ed in questo secondo viaggio lo vediamo coinvolto, quasi per caso, nella rete clandestina dei finanziamenti per la «Giovine Italia», in cui ebbe un ruolo (allo stato degli studi attuali), di secondaria importanza.
Difatti, da una lettera inviata da Costantinopoli [senza data, ma marzo 1847], per mezzo di Andrea Donizetti che tornava a Parigi, Luigi Stefano Canessa poteva scrivere a Lamberti: «Mi mandò quel po' di danaro due volte per persone del paese che gli disser veniva qui. – Quei maledetti gli riportaron la moneta addietro: adesso, con questa bella occasione [...]».[12]
In risposta a questa lettera Lamberti, il 26 aprile 1847, fa sapere che, tramite Andrea Donizetti latore della missiva, fu possibile avere 100 franchi da inviare a Giuseppe Mazzini, a Londra[13].
Il 31 maggio, da Costantinopoli, Canessa scriveva ancora a Lamberti: «[...] Manda franchi 200 che And[rea] Doniz[etti] mi pagherà. – Suo indirizzo. Darlo a Pippo [Giuseppe Mazzini]. – Con per Gio[vanni] Ruf[fini]»[14].
In un'altra lettera del 2 giugno (di Lamberti a Mazzini) la faccenda non è ancora risolta: «Unisco lettera di Can[essa] – Manderò danaro o mi darà istruzioni per la cambiale che ho mandata per

incasso, se sarà pagata, e che quella bestia [ce l'ha con Canessa! ndr] fece far da Berg[olesi] sopra Gen[ova] in favore di Doniz[etti], nipote, a moltiplicar spese e ritardo [...]»[15]
Non è chiara la "casualità" del coinvolgimento di Andrea Donizetti quale "staffetta" della «Giovine Italia». L'organizzazione mazziniana non poteva consegnare ad una persona qualsiasi materiale che poteva essere scottante e compromettere la segretezza dell'organizzazione. Certo è che, una buona parte delle amicizie parigine dello zio Gaetano avevano abbracciato da tempo la fede mazziniana, pronti, comunque, a rinnegarla (buona parte di questi), per le ragioni più disparate.
Ma questa è un'altra storia.

Francesco Cento

Ringrazio la dottoressa Bertuzzi, dell'Istituto mazziniano di Genova, per la pazienza accordatami e la dinamica collaborazione nella ricerca delle fonti.

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[1] Per i rapporti tra Donizetti, Mazzini e i mazziniani rimando a: Alberto Agazzi, *Gaetano Donizetti e la «Giovine Italia»*, sta in *Rassegna storica, anno LVI, fascicolo IV, ottobre – dicembre 1969*, Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano, Torino, 1969. pagg. 76 – 83.

[2] Nell'ambito delle celebrazioni legate al 150° dell'Unità d'Italia, accanto alla sempiterna figura di Giuseppe Verdi, santo nume tutelare musicale dei sentimenti patriottici dell' Italia, la figura di Donizetti ha iniziato a fare capolino, qua e là, quale co–patrono di cotanta santità. Mi riferisco a pubblicazioni divulgative (e non), comparse nelle librerie italiane nel corso di tutto il 2011 (e non solo).
Già chi scrive, nel suo *Chi per la patria muor / alma sì rea non ha* (Bologna, 2009), ha tentato una prima rivalutazione della figura donizettiana in seno ai fermenti risorgimentali italiani.
Nell' *Italia unita* di Gianluca Formigli (Milano, 2010), volume eminentemente divulgativo, Donizetti risulta tra i compositori risorgimentali con l'opera *Gli Esiliati in Siberia* (pag. 96).
Addirittura in *Vite per l'unità* (Roma, 2011), viene riconosciuta a DonizettiI (ben 15 pagine su un totale di 195) il diritto di stare accanto a mostri sacri delle istanze risorgimentali (quali Verdi, Cattaneo, Manzoni, Mazzini ed altri). Dove, però, Antonio Rostagno, autore del capitolo, si affanna un po' troppo nel tentativo di dimostrare che sì, Mazzini aveva citato Donizetti nella sua *Filosofia della musica*, ma che se ne sarebbe pentito (soprattutto quando il Nostro divenne Maestro di Cappella dell'imperatore d'Austria) e che, se non fosse stato per condizioni avverse, avrebbe rettificato a favore di Meyerbeer (pag. 59).

[3] Giuseppe Mazzini, *Protocollo della Giovine Italia*, Cooperativa tipografico-editrice Paolo Galeti, Imola, 1916-1922, vol. III, pag. 25.

[4] È chiaro il riferimento all'antico metodo di scrivere col limone frasi intellegibili ad occhio nudo. Passando la missiva sul vapore acqueo si sarebbe svelato l'arcano.

[5] *Protocollo* cit., vol. III, p. 93.

[6] *Protocollo* cit., vol. III, pp. 261-263.

[7] In effetti un altro mazziniano, Pietro Sterbini, voleva proporre un suo libretto a Donizetti, tramite l'amico comune Pietro Giannone. Michele Accursi recapiterà questa lettera, del 20 febbraio 1845, nella quale si legge che il libretto: «Lo farà: se piace, Doniz[ett]i lo terrà, se no glie lo rinvieremo. Solo vorrebbe indicazioni d'argomento dal Maestro, o il genere: aspetta ... risposta». Cfr.: *Protocollo* cit., vol. III, p. 182.

[8] *Protocollo* cit., vol. III, p. 184.

[9] *Protocollo* cit., vol. IV, p. 31

[10] *Protocollo* cit., vol. IV, pp. 63 e 65.

[11] Caroccia Antonio, *Documenti e lettere nella donazione Giuseppe Donizetti della biblioteca San Pietro a Majella di Napoli*, sta in *Giuseppe Donizetti pascià. Traiettorie musicali e storiche tra Italia e Turchia* (a cura di Federico Spinetti) Fondazione Donizetti, Bergamo, 2010, pag. 188 (cfr. pag. 209).

[12] *Protocollo* cit., vol. VI, p. 144

[13] *Protocollo* cit., vol. VI, p. 77.

[14] *Protocollo* cit., vol. VI, p. 168.

[15] *Protocollo* cit., vol. VI, p. 97.

MARIA REGINA D'INGHILTERRA
in Giessen

Giessen is a town with a population of not quite 80.000, in Hesse, some 60 km away from Frankfurt; it is the seat of the well-known Justus–Liebig University and proud owner of a municipal theatre. In this neat Art Nouveau building, erected between 1906-7, Cathérine Miville has been the theatre manager since 2002 and under her ægis has made a name for itself with the staging of rarely performed operas, especially from the Belcanto repertory. So in the last years you could not only enjoy highly praised productions of Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* and *La favorita*, Mercadante's *Il giuramento*, Herold's *Zampa* but also Gomes' *Lo schiavo*. In the current season we already saw a colourful and comical production of Flotow's *Alessandro Stradella*, and on 17 March the long-awaited premiere of Pacini's three-act "tragedia lirica" *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* staged under the name of *Maria Tudor* (the libretto by Leopoldo Tarentini is based on "Marie Tudor" by Victor Hugo). It marked the first performance of the opera from Pacini's second creative period in Germany. and at the same time was its first staged performance worldwide since the Camden Festival production in 1983.

Giovanni Pacini was born in Catania on 11 February 1796, half a year after Mercadante, four years after Rossini and five years after Meyerbeer, one year before Donizetti and five years before Bellini. What a prolific decade of musical genii! By the time the "*maestro delle cabalette*" died in Pescia in 1867 – less than a year before Rossini, that "*Astro maggiore*" by whom all contemporary composers *volens nolens* orientated themselves – he had composed more than 70 operas spread over 54 years! Why only a few of these (*Saffo*, *Medea*, *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*) survived on stage or in concert, is a riddle whose solution is probably pretty complex and cannot be discussed here.

In any case the first night of his *Maria regina d'Inghilterra* on 11 February 1843 at the Teatro Carolino in Palermo was not only one of the greatest success stories of Pacini but of the whole operatic world in those times, as you can easily gather from the Neapolitan journal *Salvator Rosa*, of 15 February 1843:
"*On the first evening the composer was called out about 42 times [...] accompanied by a rain of flowers and garlands. At the end of the performance many members of the public accompanied him home with lighted torches...* " (quoted from Jeremy Commons' "Notes" in the booklet of the Opera Rara production of this opera, 1996).

The reactions of the audience in the Stadttheater Gießen on its first night were not quite so effusive of course, but at any rate vociferous and enthusiastic. After the very first scenes there were "Bravi" shouts, and after nearly three gripping hours the applause turned thunderous, flower bouquets were thrown from the

dress- circle towards singers and conductor. They were meant for the excellent vocal performances and an orchestra that – conducted excitingly by Eraldo Salmieri (well-experienced in Belcanto operas) – fascinated hearts and ears. This music has left the former guiding star, Rossini, behind; is in its finely woven cantabile lines close to Bellini; shows – especially in Maria's great final scene - Donizettian quality; and in its dramatic surge appears to be pre-Verdian – yet there is quite audibly an individual shaping and colouring of phrases and characters. Equally convincing were the solo performances of the woodwind section, when for example the young clarinettist distinguished herself in the prelude to Fenimoore's impressive prison scene.

Among the singers Giuseppina Piunti was the centre of attention, as she had already breathed life into a number of Belcanto heroines in this house and lent them her voice. She was an authentic and moving actress whether as determined queen or as loving woman plagued by jealousy. She was equally convincing in the vocal part, whose tessitura is pretty high for a mezzo-soprano, despite some failings in the fioritura passages and in the demanding final scene. Her rival for Riccardo Fenimoore's love was Maria Chulkova as a girlish Clotilde, who sang and played this young woman who is believed to be an orphan superbly. Simply unforgettable was the scene at the beginning when, cuddling a cushion, she starts to write a love letter to Fenimoore: 'Caro nome che il mio cor ...'. She reminded us of Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto* indeed! Coming from Uruguay the young Leonardo Ferrando played – perhaps a bit one-dimensionally – the "Scottish exile who has become Conte di Clambrassil" (sic) as a narcissistic macho in tartan trousers and sunglasses who is sure about achieving his (not only erotic !) aim with both women. His *tenore leggiero* was beautiful-sounding and brilliant even in the sustained top C's and his rendering of the prison scene was heart-breaking. Also the two deep male voices offered more than just adequate performances: Adrian Gans as Ernesto Malcolm, a commoner who in his unfailing love of Clotilde becomes embroiled in a criminal plot, made excellent use of his well-balanced baritone, which sounded slightly booming in the more dramatic passages. The scheming, unscrupulous, Gualtiero Churchill was fittingly represented by the gruff bass of Riccardo Ferrari, who as *éminence grise* at the royal court even scares the Queen herself. In Victor Hugo's play we read about his character: "*He already has destroyed two or three favourites of the Queen. Instinctively he cleanses the palace from time to time.*" He seemed to be present all the time and also took his seat on the royal throne (more often than the monarch herself by the way). The young Belgian soprano Odilia Vandercruysse –in spite of her small vocal part - gave the Queen's page a clear profile, inquisitively peeping out from behind one of the thick buttresses of the vault.

The stage set created by Lukas Noll captivates the observer from the very first moment: Massive low-hanging piers forming a vault threateningly dominate the scenery: together with the sound of dripping water they vividly evoke "a deserted spot on the banks of the Thames". Yet they also – with the help of the

revolving stage and changing lighting effects turn into a dungeon in the Tower of London or into the private chamber of the Queen with a large bed at its centre. Apparently this is more important to Maria than the royal throne, which appropriately is accompanied by two steles with the Bible and the royal crown exhibited in their glass tops. A turntable in the background displays a sentence from Bede's Death Song: "Before the unavoidable journey there no one becomes wiser in thought than him who, by need, ponders before his going hence, what good and evil within his soul, after his day of death, will be judged"

Joachim Rathke, the director, right from the beginning makes the two women the centre of our attention. During the prelude he presents them both in simple white robes witnessing the execution of the Talbot family. When Clotilde in the course of Act II learns that she in fact is the only surviving member of this Catholic family destroyed by Henry VIII she – now acceptable at court – dons a magnificent dress, which she after all takes off in the *finale* in favour of her white robe. Queen Mary, whose face often is partly hidden by a mask, several times changes her splendid dresses depending on her prevailing role or state of mind. When for example she takes Fenimoore to task (Act II, Sc5) she wears a red garment accompanied by a matching cloth coronet and a bolero displaying the same checked pattern as Fenimoore's trousers. Also the members of the augmented choir (choirmaster Jan Hoffmann) not only sang well but expressed through their costume their characteristic feature: dressed in black from top to toe they looked like ants constantly concerned about their queen's welfare, a mass of people menacing and easily manipulated.

Like in other *libretti* of the Belcanto era that are founded on historical events, political fact and religious aspects play only a secondary part. Two love-stories skilfully interwoven are the centre of the plot: the fatal relationship between Queen Maria Tudor, "Bloody Mary", and her current favourite - Fenimoore - who in order to develop his career has started a clandestine affair with Clotilde whose true identity he has found out. The latter is ardently in love with him although she is going to marry Ernesto, who, much older than herself, has brought her up like a father. The final scene of this opera, when the two women - united in fear and suffering, with the funeral march in the background - singing out their apprehensions... (which of the two men is the one covered with a black veil being led to the scaffold?) is terrific music and could scarcely be more thrilling. As has been pointed out, the constellation of characters – an English queen with a predilection for younger men disinclined to marry a nobleman from the continent (such as the King of Spain) for political reasons – shows parallels with the story of Elizabeth I and her Earl of Essex, which Donizetti immortalised in his *Roberto Devereux* (1837).

Be that as it may: the audience in the Stadttheater Gießen, especially the numerous Belcanto aficionados from far away. were enthralled and happy about the revival of this wonderful opera and about its remarkably high standard.

Walter Wiertz

(performance of 17 March, 201

Joanna de Flandres

Drama lirico von Carlos Gomes
Libretto von Salvador de Mendonca

Uraufführung am 15. September 1863 am Teatro Lirico Fluminense von Rio de Janeiro

Personen: Joanna de Flandres - Spinto-Sopran, Raul de Manleon - Tenor, Margarida de Flandres (Joannas Schwester) - Sopran, Huberto de Courtray - Bariton, Conde Balduino (Vater der Schwestern) - Bass, Burg (Vertrauter) - Tenor; Höflinge, Kriegsvolk, Volk

Ort/Zeit: Flandern im Jahre 1225

Ein Frühwerk als Ticket für Mailand

Nach 142 Jahren wurde *Joanna de Flandres*, die zweite Oper des brasilianischen Nationalkomponisten Antonio Carlos Gomes, „wieder gefunden" und auf die Opernbühne von San Paolo zurückgebracht. Unwidersprochen wird Gomes für den größten (unter den zugegebenermaßen nicht sehr zahlreichen) brasilianischen Opernkomponisten gehalten, und auch wenn sein Werk von neun Opern in der Quantität begrenzt sein mag, so ist es doch wegen seiner dramatischen Kraft und vor allem wegen des nationalen Prestiges bedeutend. Zu seinen Erfolgen gehören die Opern *Guarany*, namentlich *Fosca*, *Maria Tudor*, *Salvator Rosa* und *Lo Schiavo*, und über ihn wurde als einem der bedeutenden Musikdramatiker neben Verdi viel im *orpheus* berichtet.
Gomes wurde 1836 in der brasilianischen Provinz Campinas geboren, im Inneren des Staates San Paolo. Er war eines von 25 Kindern von Manuel José Gomes, Dirigent des städtischen Orchesters, bei dem er seine Musikstudien begann. Im Alter von 24 Jahren übersiedelte er nach Rio de Janeiro, um seine Ausbildung am lokalen Konservatorium zu vervollständigen. Hier komponierte er auch seine beiden ersten Opern, *A noite de Castello* und *Joanna de Flandres*. Letztere brachte ihm ein Stipendium des Kaisers Dom Pedro II. ein, um am berühmten Konservatorium von Mailand zu studieren – dem Mekka der italienischen und europäischen Opernausbildung, das viele herausragende Komponisten hervorgebracht hat, darunter eben auch viele Ausländer, die in ihre Heimatländer zurückkehrten und dort gefeierte Nationalkomponisten wurden – Gomes und Tschukadian (*Arshak II*) sind die bedeutendsten davon. Im Jahre 1866 erhielt Gomes in Mailand den Abschlusstitel eines *maestro compositore*, und vier Jahre später hatte seine Oper *Il Guarany* an der Scala in Mailand Erfolg. Gomes war angekommen und ein renommierter Komponist von Rang, dessen *Fosca* selbst Verdi das Fürchten lehrte...

Von dieser Zeit an vollzog sich seine musikalische Karriere ausschließlich in Italien, mit Ausnahme seiner letzten Oper *Lo Schiavo*, die er nach seiner Rückkehr in Brasilien zu Ehren der Prinzessin Isabel, die sich für die Abschaffung der Sklaverei eingesetzt hatte, schrieb. Seine Rückkehr in die nunmehr republikanische Heimat brachte ihm Probleme, besonders wegen der Förderung, die er ehemals durch die kaiserliche Familie erfahren hatte und das gleichzeitig mit der Ausrufung der Republik. Carlo Gomes entfernte sich aus dem politischen Zentrum Brasiliens und verlegte sein Leben in den nördlichen Landesteil, wo er zum Direktor des Konservatoriums von Belém ernannt wurde. Er starb im Jahre 1896 und gilt heute als der größte Sohn seines Landes, nach dem Münzen und Geldscheine geprägt wurden. Dennoch haben seine Opern kaum noch europäischen Widerhall – von Zeit zu Zeit finden sich einzelne Werke, so der *Guarany* (wie in Bonn mit Domingo) oder eine *Fosca* (zuletzt in Wexford) oder *Salvator Rosa*; die Oper von Sofia gab einige Werke in den 80ern mit so großen Namen

wie Krassimira Stoyanova, aber allein schon der CD-Kauf seiner Aufnahmen gestaltet sich schwierig und ist eigentlich nur in Brasilien möglich, wo es eine kurze Renaissance seiner Opern mit sauren Stimmen in den 60er Jahren gab.

Mit einer angemessenen Produktion hat nun das Teatro Alfa in Rio 2005 eine wahrlich historische Produktion der Gomes-Oper *Joanna de Flandres* auf die Bühne gebracht, 142 Jahre seit der letzten Inszenierung der Oper in eben hier am Teatro Lirico Fluminense im Jahre 1863. Aus unerklärlichen Gründen war die Partitur in den Archiven des Kaiserlichen Konservatoriums verschwunden und galt als verloren gegangen oder einem Brand zum Opfer gefallen. 1996 fanden der Musikwissenschaftler Achille Picchi und der renommierte Dirigent Fabio Gomes de Oliveira aus Anlass des hundertjährigen Todestags von Gomes durch eine intensive Suche die angeblich verschwundene Oper von Gomes. Sie restaurierten sie und legten sie in einer gedruckten Fassung vor. Die Partitur enthüllt nun die Persönlichkeit und das kreative Genie des jungen Komponisten, da sie erfüllt ist von einer vibrierenden musikalischen Kraft. In in ihren Melodien finden sich Wendungen, die von der Musik Brasiliens inspiriert sind, besonders in der Arie „È esta hora", die von einem langen As-Solo der Flöte mit einem nationalen, folkloristischen Thema gefolgt wird. Und natürlich kann man den Einfluss von Opernkomponisten wie Verdi und Donizetti feststellen.
Der Belcanto-Spezialist Alex Weatherson schreibt dazu: Erstaunlich ist, dass Gomes' Komposition Einflüsse seiner europischen Kollegen zeigt, obwohl er noch nicht in Europa gewesen war. Der Plot der *Joanna de Flandres* ist ganz eindeutig dem *Nabucco* nachempfunden – dieser war erstmals in Brasilien am 18.11.1848 am Teatro Sao Paolo de Alcantara aufgeführt worden und liegt damit ein wenig zu früh, als dass Gomes ihn gesehen hätte, aber er kannte ganz sicher den Klavierauszug; und das Teatro Lirico Fluminense in Rio (wo *Joanna* und *A noito do castello* uraufgeführt wurden) brachte Verdis *Macbeth* bereits am 25.3.1852 – diese Oper hat Gomes ganz sicher gesehen (und sein Librettist de Mendonca war von schottischer Abstammung!). Ganz sicher spielte Verdi in der formativen musikalischen Ausbildung Gomes' eine große Rolle, aber es gab noch einen anderen Komponisten von Bedeutung für ihn – Giovanni Pacini, dessen Einfluss leicht in der *Joanna de Flandres* zu entdecken ist. Zwei Partituren Pacinis waren vor der Entstehung der *Joanna* nach Brasilien geschickt worden: *L'alleanza* war eine Kantate, die für den Geburtstag des Kaisers Dom Pedro von Brasilien von der Kaiserin Teresa Cristina (einer ehemaligen Schülerin Pacinis in Neapel) in Auftrag gegeben worden war und die in Rio am 1.9.1851 aufgeführt wurde. Die zweite von 1862 fiel in die Entstehungszeit der *Joanna* und war eine frühe Version von Pacinis *Nicolo de'Lapi*, Dom Pedro zwar zugeeignet aber nicht aufgeführt. Diese umfangreiche melodramatische Oper weist einen eingekerkerten abtrünnigen Vater, eine tragische Tochter und weiteres bekanntes Personal auf. Und da der Kaiser sowohl als Patron wie auch persönlich an Gomes interessiert war, kann es keinen Zweifel geben, dass Gomes dieses Manuskript studierte (das immer noch in Rio liegt). Ich denke, dies ist eine der entscheidenden Informationen für die Genesis der *Joanna de Flandres*.

Zurück ins Jahr 2005 und zur Aufführung im Teatro Alfa in Rio. Das Orchester bestand aus nur 45 Instrumenten und war eigens für diese Neuproduktion 2005 zusammengestellt worden. Natürlich konnte es nicht ein Niveau wie ein festes, ständig gemeinsam arbeitendes Orchester erreichen. Aber unter der Führung von Fabio Gomes de Oliveira sorgte es für Ausgewogenheit zwischen Bühne und Podium. Das Solistenensemble hatte sich der Musik angemessen angenommen, die voluminöse Stimmen mit viel Dramatik verlangt. Nicht alle Sänger repräsentierten diesen Stimmtyp, aber mit Sensibilität, angenehmen Stimmfarben und korrekten Interpretationen meisterten sie die technischen Schwierigkeiten der Partitur – namentlich der Bass Savio Sperandio in der Partie des Grafen Balduin, der Sopran Marcia Guimares (Margarida) und der Tenor Fernando Portari (Raul). Die Sopranistin Julianne Daud

war die Titelsängerin, der Bariton Paulo Szot als der Adlige Huberto de Courtray sowie der Tenor Sergio Wintraub in der kleinen Rolle des Burg vervollständigten das Ensemble. Anständig war auch die Teilnahme des Chores, auch dieser extra für diese Produktion zusammen geführt. Auch die optische Seite von Chris Daud/Renato Scripilliti/Wagner Freire war mehr als ansprechend – konservativ und das Drama tragend. Nach den Vorstellungen in Rio begann die Oper ihren Zug über 14 Bühnen der großen brasilianischen Städte, so dass alle Opernfans der Nation etwas davon hatten.

Die **Handlung der Oper** in portugiesischer Sprache spielt in Flandern zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge im Mittelalter. Balduin, Graf von Flandern, gilt als vermisst im Heiligen Land. Während seiner Abwesenheit übernimmt seine Tochter Joanna die Herrschaft und verliebt sich in den Troubadour Raul de Mauléon, mit dem sie eine verzehrende Liebe zehn Jahre lang verbindet, was eine Revolte der Adligen unter dem Kommando des Ritters Huberto de Courtray verursacht. Da sie sicher ist, dass ihr Vater verstorben ist, beschließt sie, Raul zu heiraten und ihm die Krone Flanderns zu übergeben. Während der Krönung erscheint plötzlich Balduin; obwohl sie den Vater erkennt, erklärt sie ihn zum Betrüger, um Krone und Geliebten nicht zu verlieren. Der Graf, von seiner anderen Tochter Margarida wieder erkannt, wird ins Gefängnis geworfen. Joanna sucht ihren Vater im Kerker auf – wenn er sich retten will, soll er sich als Betrüger bekennen und damit auf den Thron von Flandern verzichten. Beraten von seiner Tochter Margarida, weist der Graf das Ansinnen zurück. Raul hat Gewissensbisse und rät Joanna, den Vater nicht zum Tode zu verurteilen, aber sie hört nicht auf ihn. An der Spitze des Volkes steht Huberto dem Grafen Balduin im entscheidenden Moment bei, sich die Krone zurück zu erobern. Allgemeiner Tumult entsteht. Joanna versucht ihren Vater zu erstechen, da fällt ihr Raul in den Arm und tötet sie mit demselben Messer, anschließend sich selber, womit das Drama sein Ende findet.

Geerd Heinsen

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(Mein Dank geht in erster Linie an den überaus hilfsbereiten und liebenswürdigen Dirigenten Fabio Gomes de Oliveira, der mir das Material gab und mir mit weiteren Informationen ganz selbstlos half, nachdem mich Thomas Lindner auf zwei Clips aus der Aufführung in Rio aufmerksam gemacht hatte. Er wird in diesem Jahr zum Jubiläum Brasiliens die Oper unter verbesserten Umständen aufführen und mit einer professionellen DVD dokumentieren. Weiters danke ich Ingrid Wanja und Marcelo Castronuovo für ihre Übersetzungshilfen. Mein Artikel bezieht sich auf die Einleitung des Dirigenten im Programmheft der Aufführung 2005 und u. a. auf die Rezension von Norberto Modena zur Aufführung 2005 im italienischen Opera *sowie auf zahlreiche Einträge im Netz. Und natürlich danke ich Alex Weatherson für seine ebenso klugen wie weiterführenden Beobachtungen auf Grund seines immensen Wissens. G. H.)*



Zürich, 8 and 10 May 2012

Alan Jackson

Three Donizetti operas in three days - too good an opportunity to miss, especially as I had never seen either of the comedies *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali* and *I pazzi per progetto* that made up a double bill. Two days later *Poliuto* was performed. Both evenings raised the question: what are the functions of an opera director? Two things are at the top of my list. Firstly he/she needs to tell the story clearly; secondly he/she should obtain the best possible acting performance from the singers without compromising the singing. Alas, two of the productions failed these tests.

Le convenienze was spoiled by an over-active chorus that distracted from the main action. To take just one example, does a sofa-cushion fight between two chorus members really add anything to the proceedings? Quite the reverse; the opera ended up less funny than I had expected. The travesty role of Mamm'Agata was taken by the baritone Anton Scharinger, but his drag was that of a woman in outlandish male garb - surely a drag layer too far. Vocally it was a good performance with conductor Paolo Carignani impressively holding the ensembles together. He, like the orchestra, was dressed in casual everyday clothes - given that the opera is about an opera rehearsal, this was one touch I liked. Originally a one-acter in 1827, Donizetti revised and enlarged it into two acts in 1831. It was this that Zürich offered, though played without a break. At the end, the set morphed into that for *I pazzi per progetto*.

I pazzi per progetto is set in a mental hospital where the characters feign madness to further their attempts to sort out their designs and relationships. William Ashbrook thought the opera tasteless and yes, it isn't very PC, but nothing we saw or heard was really cause for offence. Thankfully the production was more restrained, the gags were funny, there weren't too many of them, and they didn't interfere with the plot, even when the characters from *Le convenienze* appeared briefly (and silently) as in-patients. There was another good ensemble performance from the soloists, and something rather better than that in Eva Liebau's assumption of the prima donna role of Norina. Her voice is a shade steely, but she sparkled in her final aria. Coloratura sopranos looking for new material for a recital or a CD need look no further than the opera's closing number "Piacer si ... nuovo e grato".

Poliuto was disappointing. Updated to the present, we may have had Christians, but we certainly didn't have ancient Rome, rather a totalitarian state (North Korea?) with the Christians meeting in the bowels of some industrial complex. This could have worked, but the director, Damiano Michieletto, failed to tell the story clearly, imposing so many stage images that one was constantly trying to work out what was being referred to. The programme mentions *Brave New World* and *1984*, so maybe these were his inspiration, but it didn't help me. We had a lot of green boiler suits which the Christians shed, revealing their underwear, when acting Christian rather than conformist. Boiler suited mannequins swelled the numbers in the crowd scenes. Other mannequins were dismembered and put back together. There was much blood and violence: Nearco is shot onstage at point-blank range rather than being led offstage to his death. Amid all this the soloists often seemed to have been left to their own devices: Paolina and Poliuto sang their duet in the final scene making very little physical or even eye contact as they moved through a slowly moving group of near (and totally) naked Christian prisoners - too much extraneous business and not enough detailed direction of the principals. And the big dramatic gesture at the end of Act II when Poliuto overturns the altar of the Roman gods became a damp squib. Upending a microphone table is just not comparable.

Alas, the musical side didn't redeem matters. Conductor Nello Santi refers in the programme to the 1960 La Scala revival with Franco Corelli and Maria Callas and says he decided to use that version of the opera. So we had additions from the Italian translation of *Les Martyrs*, and lots of cuts in the original *Poliuto* material, both large (all the second verses of cabalettas went) and small. I had hoped to hear the first part of Poliuto's Act II aria "Fu macchiato l'onor mio!" for the first time, but Massimiliano Pisapia, like Corelli at La Scala and José Carreras in concert in Vienna, didn't oblige. Pisapia and Massimo Cavalletti, the Severo, were well received, but I found their contributions closer to *can belto* than *bel canto*. The opera house in Zürich is fairly small and has a generous acoustic, which no doubt contributed to the feeling that generally there was a lack of any dynamic below *mf*. Unfortunately Fiorenza Cedolins' voice is no longer in good state, so there was little that was beautiful and too much that was squally - though suddenly in the final act duet she sang the little downwards runs with more delicacy and clarity than either Callas or Ricciarelli managed in their performances caught live on disc.

Despite all these strictures, much of the power of Donizetti's inspiration still came through, though I wasn't ever moved.

La Muette de Portici

Opéra Comique, Paris
11 April 2012

Auber's *La Muette de Portici*, to a libretto by Scribe and Delavigne, counts as the first French *Grand Opéra*. It received its first performance in February 1828 and established the defining features of the genre: five acts (usually), a historical subject (or perhaps, more accurately, a personal drama played out against the background of historical events), a ballet (or two), high vocal demands on the principal singers, scenes of pageantry involving chorus and soloists, lavish sets and at least one *coup de theatre*.

The opera tells of the Neapolitan uprising against Spanish occupation in 1647. Their fisherman leader Masaniello, spurred on by the disappearance of his sister Fenella, who we learn has been seduced by, but still loves the Viceroy's son Prince Alphonse, leads the revolt but is later poisoned when he fails to go along with the murderous excesses of the uprising. Fenella recognises Alphonse as her seducer on the day of his marriage to Princess Elvire. Elvire has by this time sheltered Fenella from the Spanish troops and goes on to forgive Alphonse. In return, Masaniello and Fenella obey their own code of hospitality and shelter the noble couple from the revolutionaries. At the end, the uprising is put down, Masaniello dies (offstage) and Fenella jumps into the lava flow from the erupting Vesuvius.

Auber's music is fascinating. There are scenes of power and some grandeur, and even where there are individual numbers it gives the impression of being through-composed. Even the most obvious display piece, Elvire's aria near the start, flows into the following scene without a close for applause. Wagner admired *La Muette*, and maybe even learned from it continuity. Would that he had also learned from its melodic richness and rhythmic vitality - it is full of memorable tunes and there are few operas that approach this one in provoking foot-tapping.

Of the principal singers, we first met Maxim Mironov in the second tenor part of Alphonse. He has the notes, but his voice is too much of a tenorino to convince here. I have a problem with Eglise Gutiérrez (the Elvire). She commands the fioriture of the role (originally taken by Laure Cinti-Damoreau) but the tone is impure and the top

cautious. Others may hear a veiled beauty, but not me. The secondary baritone role of Pietro was well done by Laurent Alvaro. As Masaniello, Michael Spyres was outstanding, with just the right mix of elegance and force. Could this be how the original Masaniello, Adolphe Nourrit, sounded? His Act 4 lullaby for Fenella "Du pauvre seul ami fidèle" was exquisite, the slow rising scale through an octave up to top B, and then down again, showed skilfully mixed registers so that it remained gentle throughout and the rhythm was stretched by exactly the right amount. He received, and deserved, an ovation. The conductor was Patrick Davin who secured good playing and paced the opera well.

And Fenella? She is the dumb girl of the title. The part was created by a ballerina, Louise Noblet, and according to the programme, later interpreted by actresses Harriet Smithson (beloved of Berlioz) and Willhelmine Schröder-Devrient (who so impressed Wagner). Auber writes expressive, descriptive music to accompany her mimed contributions. The moment when she "relates" her escape from prison using sheets as a ladder is set to a startling triplet descending figure. We had another actress, Elena Borgogni, who needs to be discussed along with the director Emma Dante. In a programme interview Dante opens by saying "I found it interesting to work at the Opéra Comique which is one of the rare lyric theatres open to experimentation. To my mind, opera must be revitalised, reinvented ..." That first sentence strikes me as very questionable, and I would be content to pass on reinvention and concentrate on doing the job well. Later Dante describes Fenella as "an animal wounded and suffering from beginning to end of the drama". In fact from before the beginning, as Borgogni spent at least twenty minutes prowling and gesticulating in front of the curtain before the house lights went down; a combination of Elektra on speed and Carmen in leg-displaying mode. For me this removed any plausibility in the relationship between the two women; Elvire would have run a mile at the approach of this Fenella, especially in view of the characterisation of Alphonse and Elvire, of whom Dante says "The aristocratic Neapolitans became in 1647 incapable of communicating with genuine people". I detected an intention to shock; certainly Fenella's miming of her seduction was graphic in the extreme. Which was such a pity as Borgogni is clearly very talented. But my disbelief in the characters' relationships was in place from the start and it didn't return.

The ballets? We had no dancing as such, but a movement troupe took the roles of fishermen and soldiers, which was effective for much of the time but went over the top in Act 3. The stage directions say "in an instant Selva and his soldiers are surrounded and disarmed". Here they were disrobed as well - totally - and killed, so they stayed naked, some face down, some face up, on stage during the succeeding prayer that ends the act. Again, the competence of these "dancers" was not in doubt and clearly much time had been spent choreographing and rehearsing complex movements. But ...

There were no lavish sets, which personally I don't mind, even if it would be interesting once to see a *Grand Opéra* with this aspect close to what was done originally. We made do with a number of doors mounted on small trolleys pushed from behind by the movement troupe. I found them ineffective as location indicators and boring to look at.

As for the final *coup de théâtre*, volcanic eruption was replaced by a symbolic death for Fenella who appears transformed into a martyr's shrine. Reading the programme after the event revealed that this was to show that her death led to an amelioration in the lives of the Neapolitans under Alphonse and Elvire who seem determined to turn their backs on dictatorship. I wonder! At the time I just felt cheated.

This wasn't one of those productions where the director doesn't believe in the opera and so imposes some concept. Dante obviously does believe in it, and the power and effectiveness of Auber's opera at times shone through. But I found some of the direction misconceived and a little moderation would have achieved much more. This *La Muette* is a co-production with La Monnaie, Brussels, though it is not listed in their 2012/13 season. When it is done there, despite my reservations, it would be worth considering by anyone with an interest in seeing this pivotal work, especially if Spyres remains in the cast.

Alan Jackson

Monsigny's *Le Roi et le Fermier*

Versailles (Opéra Royale) 5th February 2012

Douglas M. Bennett

In the eighteenth century a day-return trip to Versailles would have seemed all but impossible. Nowadays we are accustomed to fast and reliable transport, so it perplexed me to realise as I trekked through the virgin snow in Russell Square before dawn that my plan to spend the day in Versailles might not go as well as I had hoped. I had chosen the second of two performances of Monsigny's *Le Roi et le Fermier* by the American group Opera Lafayette because, being in the afternoon, I could avoid an expensive overnight stay in France, but the mild winter had lulled me into a false sense of security. As the day approached the forecasts predicted snow and transport disruption.

When I reached St Pancras Station I boarded in trepidation that I might be engulfed in some kind of storm, but the train arrived on time with only the minor irritation that the doors seemed reluctant to allow me into France. Once released, I resisted the temptation to dawdle in Paris and emerged from the RER into an even chillier Versailles. I was soon seated in the relative comfort of the Château, ignoring the snap-happy tourists as I prepared for Monsigny's *opéra comique*.

The composer Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny may not be a familiar name in the world of opera, but in the uniquely French world of *opéra comique* he has a reputation for well-made music comedies. But *opéra comique* doesn't survive just on its composer; it also needs a good *livret*. Monsigny's *Rose et Colas* and *Le Deserteur* benefit from words by Michel-Jean Sedaine. Sedaine's family were in the building trade (his father was an architect). The young Sedaine had ambition but no money, but he thrived in the theatre, impressing Diderot and became an *Académicien* (secretary for architecture). *Le Roi et le Fermier* also benefits from having a text by Sedaine, but with a rather unusual source: an English play by Robert Dodsley; *The King and the Miller of Mansfield* (1737). Following Britain's Glorious Revolution the idea of a king enjoying a friendly encounter with a lowly miller would have been enjoyed by an English audience, but in pre-revolutionary Paris such a romantic notion surely required a heavy dose of Gallic irony to succeed.

For Sedaine and Monsigny this *opéra comique* based on Dodsley's play lifted them for the first time out of the infamous Paris fairgrounds. Its success and the collaborators' subsequent 'hits' are only eclipsed by the identity of their greatest fan; Queen Marie-Antoinette: *Le Roi et le Fermier* was the first piece to be staged in her theatre in the Trianon in 1780. I wonder if her purpose in performing this particular comedy might have been to encourage her husband Louis XVI to be more sympathetic towards ordinary Frenchmen. If so her enlightened experiment may have had tragic consequences in Louis' catastrophically unsuccessful attempt to appeal to his people's better nature during the worst excesses of the *Révolution*.

But my thoughts were soon diverted towards the discomfort endured in *Ancien Régime* Versailles, which I had to suffer as I wedged myself into the minimal space allocated to the nobility in the boxes close by the royal box.

So to this first modern production of *Le Roi et le Fermier* in Versailles as seen on 4th February: the backdrops created in 1780 had been refurbished and adapted for the *Opéra Royale*. This touch of

authenticity added a certain frisson of expectation as the small American orchestra laboriously tuned up. The overture was played with great verve, but it's evocation of a looming storm should have led straight into the opening number when the authentically gloomy forest was revealed on stage. In this production a complete break was imposed whilst two statuesque figures to either side recited some portentous lines from the preface to the published score. These figures intervened later to deliver sections of spoken text whilst the singers acted out in 'dumb show'. The reasoning emerged afterwards: apparently there had been doubts about the ability of the non-francophone cast to deliver spoken French. Whatever the justification, it was a poor compromise as it was far from clear that these *ex cathedra* figures were intended to represent Sedaine and his wife.

Once the action was underway the music developed well, particularly notable being a duet for Richard the farmer (William Sharp) and his sister Betsy (Yulia van Doren). Betsy's breathlessness when relating the news that their cousin Jenny, the *amoureuse* of Richard, has been abducted by the evil milord Lurewel (a member of the royal hunting party being disrupted by the storm) uses stuttering music similar to Papageno's in *Die Zauberflöte*.

When Jenny actually appeared, having escaped from Lurewel, it was not difficult to work out why Marie Antoinette chose to sing that part in 1780. Jenny has the best tunes and they develop into a plaintive miniature operatic *scena*. Dominique Labelle delivered it with great aplomb.

Act 1 ends with the storm that begins Act 2 in which the king is discovered alone, lost in the forest. The scene neatly parallels the appearance of the king in Mozart's *Idomeneo*. Mozart could have seen *Le Roi et le Fermier* in Paris in 1778. In this production the King (Thomas Michael Allen) looked a little like Marie Antoinette's brother Joseph. The original King (in the *Opéra Comique* in 1762) was the bulky Clairval (an excellent Blondel in Grétry's *Richard Cœur de lion* and Beast in *Zémire et Azor)*. In the Trianon the part was played by the lean and enlightened *comte d'Adhémar*, the future ambassador to London (where he encountered Fox and Pitt, and tried to bring peace between the two warring nations).

I found myself wondering what other aspects of this production echoed the Trianon performance. Lord Lurewel (Jeffrey Thompson) with a companion both looked like characters from the Marquise de Sade: could this *Grand Guignol* characterisation be a kind of 'Gallic irony'? If so it doesn't match our idea of the 'evil lord' of the eighteenth century typified by Laclos' perverse *vicomte de Valmont*, but it might fit the music: a kind of pre-Offenbachian duet and an exaggerated 'hunting' metaphor aria (Lurewel's idea of a suitable hunting 'quarry' being the captive Jenny). It is not known who sang the part in the Trianon: did no one want to own up to having played it? At this point my efforts to identify echoes of the 1780 production came to a halt.

The most adventurous music comes in Act 3 which takes place in the home of Richard the *fermier* (farmer/forester/game-warden). The mother of Richard (Dolores Ziegler pouring her prodigious energy into this minor part) joins in a trio with her daughter Betsy and niece Jenny that is full of contrapuntal entries and ingenious characterisation. The singers gave it a right royal treatment.

The final revelation of Lurewel's evil behaviour coincides with discovery of the King's presence in a septet that is more notable for its brevity than its musical sophistication. From the earlier trio it was clear that Monsigny could sustain a musical structure, so why not here? Perhaps his fairground experience had taught him that in a noisy public theatre it would have been lost.

Opera Lafayette is to be applauded for having exhumed this refreshing *opéra comique*, but having had the nerve to bring this piece of French heritage to the *Opéra Royale* they seemed a little over-awed by the gilded venue.

But don't take my criticism to mean that I didn't enjoy making my risky pilgrimage to Versailles. In many ways *Le Roi et le Fermier* has proved to be one of the most rewarding of my delvings into the late eighteenth century.

Which is just as well because my return journey from Versailles was not entirely incident-free. The first part on the RER was satisfactory, but at the *Gare du Nord* a last minute change to the train (perhaps because the doors hadn't opened) meant the train left 30 minutes late and suffered a further 30 minute delay on the approach to St Pancras. Being only 1 hour late in these circumstances was fortunate: a more recent Eurostar journey from Paris to London took over 9 hours.

Adjusting back to London, a modern 'birthplace of democracy', I reviewed my 'day out'. There is no doubt the production erred a little towards respectful homage, but it was not just yet another display of

gratitude by the Americans for French support to their rebellion against the British. The Versailles ambiance and the precedent of an amateur royal performance (not to mention the uncomfortable seating) had left an indelible impression, which is more than could be said for my footfalls of that morning: as I trekked back through Russell Square the snow had already melted.

I am left with something to look forward to: Opera Lafayette issue recordings of the music from their performances on the Naxos label; this one hopefully will come out later this year.

DONIZETTIAN DISCOVERY

Emerging from an unwilling obscurity on 8 May this year in the depths of the Conservatorio Library in Palermo, and thanks to Dr Dario Lo Cicero, *docente bibliotecario*, are the manuscripts of two "lost" cantatas by Donizetti both described as "composed in the summer of 1825" the first of them a *Cantata per il natalizio di Re Ferdinando I* a title surely open to question as Ferdinando I died on 4 January 1825 and it may in fact be the *Cantata per il compleanno di Francesco I re di Napoli* listed by Inzaghi as "*Perdute*" (IN.249) - the second a *Cantata per la partenze del Lugotenente Generale Marchese Ugo delle Favare* which appears to have evaded Inzaghi but both of these cantate are itemised personally by Gaetano himself (Ashbrook p36 items 4 & 5 where the first of them is described as *Cantata per la Nascita del Re di Napoli Francesco primo. In Palermo*). Each perhaps sung in the Teatro Carolino (now tragically an empty shell) in the traumatic period of Gaetano's stay in the famous capital city as *maestro di cappella.* To add to this treasure trove is the autograph of an insert aria supplied for the wife of Antonio Tamburini 'Cimentando i venti e l'onde' to sing in Rossini's L'italiana in Algeri' staged in Palermo to plug the gap opened by the delayed arrival of the primadonna Elisabeth Féron. It certainly turned out to be a "trial" for the audience as Donizetti called the lady "a dog" in a letter to Mayr. One wonders how much more elusive music could emerge in due course: for example the autographs of *Alahor in Granata, Il castello degli invalidi, Enrico di Borgogna* and *Una follia* just to make a modest start! **AW**

Past present and Proposed No.14

Pip Clayton

Four theatres, The Queen's, The King's, His Majesty's and Her Majesty's in the Haymarket

The Second Theatre contd. Trials and tribulations of Managers and Lessees

From 1793 until 1803 William Taylor maintained full control of the theatre but then was forced to sell his interest to a Francis Gould but he retained his role as manager. Gould is best remembered for the first theatre riot of the nineteenth century. The Bishop of London had ordered that the performance on a Saturday should end before twelve-o-clock. On the 15th June 1807 Gould complied with that order, unfortunately it was in the middle of the ballet. The audience finding that the performance would not continue threw the chairs out of the boxes, smashed the benches. broke the chandeliers and the piano-forte and what instruments they could get their hands on. Not only that, he had been forced to raise prices because of the outrageous salary paid to Angelica Catalani which was £5,000 for the season plus two benefit nights guaranteed at £1,000 each. Her total profits that year with concerts and singing in the provinces were in excess of £16,700. Gould's short reign lasted only until 1807, when he died, and of course in debt. Control of the theatre now fell upon Edmund Waters, the executor of Gould's estate. A struggle between Taylor and Waters resulted in the Courts placing the theatre in the hands of trustees. In 1812 the Lord Chamberlain closed the theatre and there was no season at all in 1813, and over three hundred staff at the theatre were thrown out of work. The courts finally found in favour of Waters and in 1814 he purchased the entire concern for £35,000. Taylor still tried to regain control and in 1816 the sale was rescinded and Waters was required to repay over £70,000. To raise this he took out a mortgage with a Mr Chambers on the opera house and the buildings attached to it plus all the furnishings of the theatre. (This mortgage was not cleared until 1845.) In 1820 he applied for a further loan from Mr Chambers to pay the orchestra whose salary was ten nights in arrears, Chambers refused and Waters facing ruin like so many before him fled to France.

I said in the last article that William Taylor was either very brave or very stupid, but who was he? He was born in 1753 and was a bank clerk, he knew nothing of music, and was ignorant of any foreign language. The earliest mention I have found is 1778 when he first became involved in the King's Theatre. Adding up the total amounts quoted in what references I have been able to find plus the many number that give the amount as unspecified I think that he owed £100,000 at the very least and probably much more. What I have read about him I would say he was a thief, a cheat and a liar. In 1797 he became a Member of Parliament for Leominster a position that gave him immunity from his creditors. Dismissed in 1802 he fled to France, on his return he became M.P. for Barnstable in 1806-12. He lived in the King's Bench a debtors prison in Southwark for most of his life, paid little of his debts to builders, shareholders, performers or composers. In the King's Bench he maintained an apartment next to Emma, Lady Hamilton and lived in luxury and entertained lavishly. He died in 1834, according to the Oxford Dictionary, but Grove gives the date as 1825.

Enter now John Ebers, born in London in 1785 of German immigrants, he had a successful bookshop in Bond Street (see Newsletter No.110). He became manager of the theatre between 1820 and 1828. He was involved in a lawsuit due to his assistant manager Antonio Benelli absconding with all the money in 1824 and in another lawsuit in 1826, concerning the salary of the chorus, which he lost. But he did refuse to re-engage Catalani with her extravagant demands one of which was she should be paid every six weeks.

In 1824 Giuditta Pasta now an artist of some standing returned in triumph to London, her debut at the King's Theatre had been in 1817 as Telemachus in Cimarosa's *Penelope*, now her

first role in London was as Desdemona in Rossini's *Otello.* During some of those intervening years she was the pupil of another singer, Giovanni Battista Velluti (I have only found three references to this but nothing to confirm it) and the London audience wanted to know who he was. They would get the answer in 1825. Also in 1824 another young singer made her debut at the age of sixteen this was Mme. Garcia singing another of Rossini's characters, *Rosina.* In June 1825 anticipation was high for the forthcoming production of Meyerbeer's *Il Crociato in Egitto* the first of his operas to be heard in London. Not only that but the role of Armando was to be sung by Giovanni Battista Velluti, a castrato, written for him by Meyerbeer and it has a place in the history of opera being the last opera to be specifically composed for that particular voice. It had been over twenty-five years since a castrato had been heard in London and excitement and curiosity was rife. For the dress rehearsal on the 29th the theatre was full with a paying audience, even the critics were out in force. The following morning the critic for The Times wrote:- *Our opinion was that the manly British public and the British fair would have been spared the disgust of such an appearance as that of Velluti upon any theatre of this metropolis.* The real first night was on the 30th and the following morning the critics were completely mixed for and against but none as vituperative as The Times. This time he added that:- *his voice has the shrillness of a woman's but not its sweetness. At times it burst upon us with all the discordance of a peacock's scream.* No doubt Velluti was hurt but I guess not bothered to any great extent as he collected £700 for the dress rehearsal, a salary of £600 for the remaining few performances of the season plus £2,300 in advance for the following season. But what a difference to the acclaim and adulation accorded to those earlier castrati, Senesino and Farinelli. The other main singers were Nicolas Levasseur the eminent French Bass as Aladino the father of Palmide who is loved by Armando. Both were given excellent critiques but the more so for Mme. Garcia in her first serious role. One critic wrote:- *she gave some exquisite singing, but proved that her dramatic talents are not limited to comedy. This young lady will certainly gain an eminence in her profession which few have obtained.* Another thought:- *in time, by study and practice would in all probability rise to the very pinnacle of the art.* Both critics were right, as she become known as the brilliant and ill-fated Malibran. In 1828 Ebers was forced into bankruptcy and returned to selling books in his shop.

The period 1820 until 1867 became known as the Golden Age of opera and the King's Theatre or Her Majesty's Theatre as it became in 1837 was considered the most magnificent opera house in Europe and was mentioned in all foreign guide books to London, not only for its ambience but also for the star casts that appeared. So far my articles have only dealt with the operas and their singers who were presented there, but we should also appreciate the number of Prima Ballerina's, such as Marie Taglioni, Lucille Grahn, Fanny Cerrito and Carlotta Grisi. Also the Premiere Danseurs, Jean-Georges Noverre, Jules Perrot and Auguste Vestris all stars in their own right who also appeared there.

Yet another took over the reigns, this was Pierre Francois Laporte, born in Paris in 1799, his father Jacques was the celebrated Harlequin of the Théâtre de Vaudeville for over thirty years, (so at least the theatre was in his blood.) The young Pierre came to London at an early age and made his debut at Drury Lane in 1826, the following year he joined the company at the King's Theatre and in 1828 became manager. He was not popular as he reduced the salaries of all the staff and particularly of the orchestra and negotiated with singers very strongly to obtain the lowest fee possible.

The great success in May 1832 was the production of Beethoven's *Fidelio* with Wilhelmine Schröder -Devrient as Leonora and Anton Haitzinger as Florestan. The Times said:- *contrary to our expectation it proved completely successful,* not only that but, *owing to the multitude of encores, the audience might almost as well waited to the end, and insisted on*

a repetition of the whole opera. The overture had to be played twice as was the chorus of prisoners and after the final curtain calls the whole of the finale had to be repeated.

At Covent Garden and Drury Lane both of these theatres were only licensed to perform plays but illegally they also presented opera. But in 1833 a great objection was taken by the public to the presenting of opera in what where essentially the two playhouses. Despite the objections *Marino Faliero* was given at Covent Garden in 1835. A new theatre the English Opera House (now the Lyceum) opened in 1834 where in 1836 they presented two operas by Donizetti, *L'elisir d'amore* on 10 December and a week later on the 17th *Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo* both given in an English translation.

Of *L'elisir d'amore* the Times said:- *on the whole. there was sufficient to constitute a delightful evenings entertainment, the plot was good, the music pleasing, the singing everything that could be desired, and the band excellent.* While The Morning Post remarked:- *We greatly question whether the love of Italian music is sufficiently advanced in this country to make this experiment successful.* The Lyceum also gave London's first performances of *Il campanello di notte* late in 1837 and *Betly* in January 1838 both of course in English.

In 1835 Laporte engaged a young solicitor aged twenty-four to assist him in a legal capacity which was unsuccessful as Laporte like a lot of others went to the Fleet prison for debt. The young solicitor arranged for his release and to retain his position as lessee in order to pay off his debt. Impressed Laporte asked the young man to take over the financial affairs of the King's Theatre and in 1836 he did so, and six years later in 1842 took over the complete control of the theatre. The young man in question was Benjamin Lumley who was to become the greatest impresario in London for the next twenty-two years. If you read his memoirs *Reminiscences of the Opera* you get the impression he was the only person to make a profit from presenting opera, although the Press took his claims with a pinch of salt.

Now Donizetti's operas followed in quick succession *Belisario* opened the season in April 1837, with the main characters all making their debut in London, none of them now remembered which is not surprising as the Times said of them. "*The barytone* (Sig. Inchindo) *is a good musician; but to "achieve greatness" cannot fall to his lot. He should have lived in the days of Paesiello, Cimarosa and other quiet melodists of the last century.* Of the roles of Antonina, taken by Madame Giannoni, *was wholly unsuited for the part and completed it by the tragedy rant of singing: while poor Mdlle. De Angeoli as* Irene *screamed through hers at the top of her voice.* Of the score the only comment was, *With a great respect for our recent English productions of this kind, we should say that Balfe and Barnett (John?) are great when compared with this specimen of Donizetti.".*

The Morning Post review started with: "*The performances and the audience on Saturday were equally worthy of each other and unworthy of the house. The opera was so ill performed that it is unfair to give a decided opinion as to its merits. The house was composed of the most extraordinary mixed, or, rather bad, company we have seen within its walls. One only wonders where the people who occupied the boxes were collected from, and as to the pit, if the management goes on to stock it in the same manner, the people of consideration who have hitherto been seen they will decline entering it.* But the critic was a little kinder to the singers but on the whole thought they were unsuitable. Of the score it was felt *that the music is good and graceful, but deficient in dignity for a serious subject. Donizetti who has a sparkling vein of composition, and if not original is always pleasing, seems to have forgotten the anquish of Belisarius. Indeed we have doubts whether the music was not composed for some other subject, and the story of Belisarius adapted to it after it was complete. With that one striking incongruity before us, the opera rather deserves our praise than censure."*

Lucia di Lammermoor followed in April 1838 with Queen Victoria in the Royal Box. The cast included Fanny Persiani, Rubini and Tamburini. The critic from The Times must have had a bad day as he had this to say:- *that it was better performed than written, for, like other*

Italian operas, it is rather a succession of scenes than any attempt at a plot or regular drama, and *after all Donizetti is but of a mediocre School".* The Morning Post however was a little more enthusiastic, its review was a column the full depth of the paper which gave a very detailed resumé of the opera concluding with, *the opera may be considered as completely successful, and we have no doubt that when it comes to be repeated and understood, the abundance of melodies it contains will make it very popular.* The only reservation was that Edgar's suicide in Kelpies Flow as in the novel could have been achieved by the stage machinery was abandoned for the common-place dagger's point.

Just over three weeks later on June 28 Victoria was crowned Queen in Westminster Abbey and in the week prior to this ceremony she held an afternoon soiree in her new home, Buckingham Palace. The entertainment was provided by singers from Her Majesty's Theatre accompanied by Michael Costa at the piano. The programme consisted of arias, duets and quartets from operas by Rossini, Bellini, Mercadante and of course Donizetti and ended with the finale to Costa's new opera *Malek Adel.*

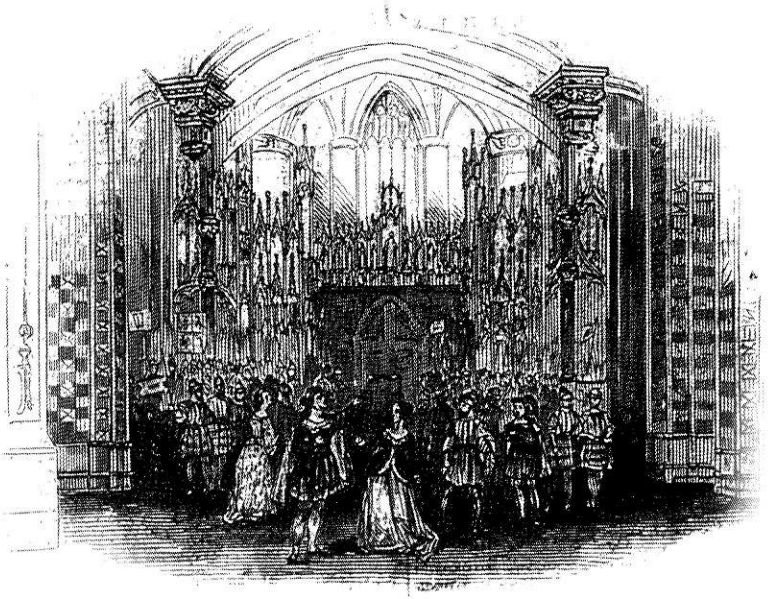
Parisina followed on June 1st, the next three years saw *Lucrezia Borgia* in June 1839, *Torquato Tasso* in March 1840 and Fausta in May 1841.

Monsieur Laporte was also responsible for the second riot at the theatre, this was the 'Tamburini Row in 1841. All artist's for the season had been asked to take a fairly substantial cut in their salary, Tamburini had refused to accept the lower fee offered and consequently was not engaged. On April 30, Filippo Coletti sang Tamburini's role in *I puritani*, he was hissed throughout the performance. At the end the audience called for Laporte who made the mistake of addressing them in French with the excuse that before Easter it was impossible to engage first-rate talent, Easter is over was the crowds reply. The curtain arose for the ballet but at the first note from the orchestra the deafening noise from all parts of the house drowned the music. There was no let-up, the audience would not be quiet. Time and time Laporte came out to try and pacify them but only made things worse certainly when he told them, as manager, he had the right to take on singers at his discretion, and that he was not responsible to an audience. The uproar did not abate and now Laporte added fuel to the flame by saying he would re-engage Tamburini but only on conditions, at this the gentlemen in the stage boxes on either side climbed over on to the stage shouting the name of their favourite and by sheer numbers forced the evening's performance to end when the curtain fell shortly after one o'clock on May 1st.

Laporte lost the battle and Tamburini was back at Her Majesty's Theatre in time to appear in the next Donizetti opera having its first performance in London on June 24. This was *Roberto Devereux* with Rubini in the title role, Grisi as Queen Elizabeth and Tamburini as Nottingham. It is difficult to quote the reviews of the music as they were tied in with what the characters were singing, i.e. in such comments as *"the composer has provided a sufficient number of melodies, pleasing in themselves, which are susceptible of infinite embellishment, and the result is a very brilliant performance".* But I would say on the whole they were favourable. The role of the Duchess of Nottingham was taken by Madame Granchi making her début in London and her efforts produced just one line in the Times –"*was too much for her, though she took the greatest pains*" and in the Morning Post *"though its importance would require, perhaps a singer of a higher rank".*

At the end of the season Laporte returned to his father's house near Paris, four months later at the early age of forty-two he died of what was then called heart disease, we now call a heart attack. But to his credit he did bring to London the greatest singers of the age.

Gemma di Vergy opened in March 1842 with Madame Moltini in the title role. Lumley in his Reminiscences said that the opera "although abounding in melody and effects, both dramatic and musical, was not esteemed one of Donizetti's finer compositions. For some time



SCENE FROM THE OPERA OF "ADELIA."



SCENE FROM RICCI'S NEW OPERA OF "CORRADO DI ALTAMURA," AT HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

negotiations had been carried on with Donizetti for a new opera for Her Majesty's Theatre to a libretto by Felice Romani, but Romani had always refused. It was at this time that Lumley went to Italy and persuaded the poet to write a libretto. Donizetti was delighted and undertook to write the music but Romani failed to submit the libretti and the opportunity for the opera *Circe* was lost. This first season of Lumley's reign must have been one hell of a roller coaster ride from the start, to list a few of the upsets:- Grisi was pregnant and could not perform until late in the season (Erminia Frezzolini was engaged as a substitute). Persiani could not sing because she was suffering from a cold, a sore throat, a fever, illness, spasms even sea-sickness even though she was on dry land, or a whole list of reasons why she could not appear. (A case of- you name it she suffered from it). Sig. Mario refused to sing Pollione without Grisi as *Norma*. When asked as a gentleman to appear his reply was, *that he was engaged to sing, not to appear.* When Frezzolini did arrive after being delayed for three days because of bad weather she had a bad cold and could not appear. But on Saturday June 25th things came to a head, Persiani was due to sing in *Il puritani* but shortly before curtain a message with a Dr's certificate arrived to say she was too ill to be able to sing. This time it was genuine! The theatre was full and when it was announced that the opera was changed to *Beatrice di Tend*a all hell was let loose. Boo's, hissing and cat-calls accompanied by the sound of breaking furniture and fixtures did not abate. Ladies left the theatre in terror and the Queen who had intended to visit the opera on being informed of the uproar did not leave the Palace. After two hours or so with the news that money would be returned it quietened down, but only the ballet was given. The third and last riot at Her Majesty's Theatre was over.

Three more Donizetti operas were given their London première at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1843, *Adelia* in March **(see illustration)** and *Linda di Chamounix* on the 1st of June. With the third opera our composer really hit the jackpot and at last he got the rave reviews that had been denied him for so long. The opera still a firm favourite today was *Don Pasquale*. It was produced on June the 29th for Luigi Lablache's benefit night with Grisi as Norina and Giovanni Mario as Ernesto. It was repeated on July 1st, 4th and 6th the last being a benefit for Grisi. The Times did not give a review, (I wonder if they may have had to pay for their seat as it was a benefit ? The Morning Post recorded that with the ballet the evening was not over till after one in the morning, but that even at the time of writing *"our sides are still aching with what we took in - even the listless Adonises in the stalls were for once convulsed out of all propriety, the ladies, too, laughed till their whale-bones cracked."* The critic ended his review with this succinct comment, *"And only to think of this taking place in a country where to laugh in public is a grievous sin."*

August 1844 saw a production of another of those many operas for the first time in London which have rarely been seen or heard since, this was Federico Ricci's *Corrado di Altamura* **(see illustration).** In 1846 virtually the whole roster of artists and orchestra led by Michael Costa defected to start the new Royal Italian Opera at Covent Garden, see Newsletter No.107. And it was at Covent Garden the following year that another of Donizetti's operas was produced. This was *Maria di Rohan,* the cast included Marietta Alboni as *Gondi*, Lorenzo Salvi as *Chalais*, Giorgio Ronconi as *Chevreuse* with his wife "El Guerra" in the title role. It was said of this singer, "that she failed on virtually every opera stage in Europe", and due to her inadequacy one of Donizetti's finest opera was a total disaster. (This was a sure case of where Ronconi sang so did his wife - no wife no Ronconi). But there were still operas to be heard for the first time at Her Majesty's, *L'ajo nell' Imbarazzo* as *Don Gregorio* in 1846, *La favorita* in 1847 although it had been given at Drury Lane in English in 1843 and at Covent Garden in French in 1845, *La figlia del reggimento* also in 1847, see Newsletter No.111. A production of *Don Sebastien* was planned for 1860 and a Italian/English libretto was published but a performance never materialised.



SCENE (THE LAST) FROM THE OPERA OF "MEDEA."

But *Poliuto* as *I Martiri* was given at Covent Garden in 1852 see Newsletter No.101. That's not a bad record, twenty-three operas in just under thirty years. In 1850 the season opened with a new production of Simon Mayer's (sic) opera *Medea*, (**see illustration**.) (*Medea* had been produced earlier in 1826 with Guiditta Pasta in the title role and Albertico Curioni as Jason. Most of the opera going public could not recall the earlier performances and expectations were running high. Now Pasta's adopted daughter Teresa Parodi was to essay the title role (she had already sung another of Pasta's roles, Norma in the previous year.) By all accounts she was the only member of the cast who was not affected by the miasma rising from the Thames that has affected singers even to this day).

The three seasons that Jenny Lind had given in 1847, 1848 and 1849 had meant that the finances under Lumley's control were in good shape. But after a disastrous season in 1852 the theatre was heavily in debt, and the theatrical properties valued at £23,000 were put up for sale. They were purchased for the measly sum of £10,000 by a young man of the Nobility (Lord Ward who was in fact the Earl of Dudley) who denied that he had any intention of running the theatre. However before the season of 1853 could open Lumley and the Earl began to argue as to who would actually be in charge. The Earl had the last word albeit a drastic one as he closed the theatre for three years and it was only an Act of God that improved the theatres affairs. On the morning of the 5th March 1856 after an all night masked ball, Covent Garden was burnt to the ground.

Even though there was still some animosity between the two men the Earl granted Lumley an under-lease for four years and Her Majesty's Theatre re-opened. One of the first operas given was Verdi's *La traviata* with Marietta Piccolomini as Violetta. The soprano was

successful but the opera was not. The Times before the premiere wrote against the 'foul and hideous horrors' of the subject, and thought 'it was no more than a play set to music'.

For the 1858 season although he did not know it at the time Lumley had engaged one of the greatest star singers of that period. The singer was Thérèse Tietjens and her debut was as Valentine on Tuesday 13 April in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. The Queen and Prince Albert were in the Royal Box as they were for the second performance on the 15th. The next new opera to be given was Verdi's *Luisa Miller* on the 8th June, it was a failure although sung by Piccolomini. Two more Verdi operas were heard in London, *Les Vêpres siciliennes* in 1859 at Drury Lane in Mr E.T. Smith's Italian opera season, which was managed by John Mapleson and, *Un ballo in maschera* at the Lyceum in 1861 when Mapleson gave his first season of opera as an independent impresario. Considered successful, neither, like the previous two works did not find favour with with the anti-Verdians. But Mr Mapleson was to become a force to reckon with both here and in America for the next twenty-five years.

By the end of the 1858 season Lumley was in arrears of three quarters of the annual rent and Lord Ward taking advantage of the situation issued a writ for the fatal 'arrears of rent'. It did not matter that Lumley had paid for the properties which included sets and costumes of the theatre at the beginning of the season (all previous properties having been purchased by Lord Ward) now these latest items were appropriated in lieu of part of the rent. Lord Ward's solicitor urged Lumley to see his client, but the Noble Lord as he himself said **'had gone to Scotland to be out of the way.'** It seems yet again that a member of the Nobility with an eye to making a fortune without the knowledge of how to manage a theatre or the artists who would appear there decided to take over, and so on the 10th of August, Lord Ward, Earl of Dudley took over the theatre. Benjamin Lumley after nearly a quarter of a century of running every aspect of the theatre and quite possibly the only person since the theatre opened to make the venue profitable was forced out of the opera house.

And what was the first thing the Noble Lord did? He closed the theatre until 1860.

To be continued

William Vincent Wallace

Composer, Virtuoso and Adventurer

Andrew Lamb

Fullers Wood Press 2012

237 pp brochure

It is one of those odd quirks of operatic destiny that a Delibes, a Saint-Saëns or a Massenet who scarcely ever ventured out of reach of gauloises and chicory-coffee are famed for their exoticism while those contemporaries with a genuine wanderlust are left at home. How is it that the real exotics of musical backpacking like Lauro Rossi, Nicola De Giosa or William Vincent Wallace find it so hard to get a hearing? It is a neglect that bears no relation whatsoever to the quality of their music. Wallace, born William (the Vincent came later) in nineteen-century Ireland, though not by birth a Victorian, (Andrew Lamb traces him to 1812) acquired all the qualities of an Irish Victorian to be sure, and through-and-through with everything restless that implies, range and outlook, and even though such a heredity might have dampened his scope the combination of *his* temperament and *her* vast domains gave him the impetus to seek his fortune throughout the world. As a talented, indeed spectacular, violinist a comfortable career could have beckoned - concerts in Dublin, eminent musical

contacts and contracts did not however deter him from abandoning house and home and finding himself in 1835 *en route* for Australia with a pretty girl (and some of his family) in tow.

Andrew Lamb casts an amused glance over the myths which were soon to occur after such a youthful and virtuosic casting-off of the native greensward. To begin with he had no immediate Scottish descent; his renowned tour of India (turbans and turmeric) turns out to have been fiction; "Blarney" alas, is the irresistible term for exotic travel tales (even though backed up by Berlioz) spun to conceal a covert flight from Sydney for debt. Genuine South American adventures, a saga of hardship and improvised concerts, occasional publishing, intricate details - a diary of encounters, friendship, enmities - this is a biography of singular precision. We read with fascination of concerts and operas in Mexico together with Adele Cesari, Vaccai's ex-inamorata, got up in the feathered hat, white silk tights and cloak singing Romeo – in the very same garb in which she had created that role in his celebrated *Giulietta e Romeo* so many light years before. Here are gaps we have longed to fill. Two years in the States followed, prefaced by months in the South with fever. Why he went there we don't know but a highly detailed account of concerts in New York is supplied after which we find him in London. A snapshot of his début concert in the Hanover Square Rooms in 1845 uncovers the nature and quality of the hidden treasures of this book:

"*...on Saturday. 3 May, at a concert promoted by the tenor Giacinto Marras (1810-83), a Neapolitan of Spanish descent married to an Englishwoman from Cheltenham...*" [whoever knew that? Marras had sung the role of Nelly – clearly in travesty – in the first student performance of Bellini's *Adelson e Salvini* at the Naples Conservatorio in 1825]

'*...the occasion included the violinist Prosper Sainton (1813-90) and the soprano Eugenia Garcia (1815-80), sister-in-law of the celebrated Maria Malibran (1808-36). With orchestral accompaniment, Wallace played his Grand Fantasia and Variations on the Romance from Halévy's opera L'Éclair, and the Variations, Andante Cantabile and Rondo Scherzoso on the Cracovienne, as well as accompanying Marras in the première of his song 'Lascia o Cara le Vergine Plume', a setting of words to Wallace's piano composition Le Rêve.*"

He was now a virtuoso pianist, praised (with reserve) by Chorley and with an extraordinary mode of dress '*...a large white hat with a very broad brim, and a full suit coat, waistcoat and trousers – of Nankin, or Nankeen..{ie of yellow or buff cotton]. In his hand he carried a large stick, such as in Ireland would be termed a shillelagh.*" Even though he was living in Piccadilly he was still an unknown but before the end of the year he would be a celebrity. London, it seems, spurred him to operatic success, though "*he had no previous track record as an operatic composer*" before the end of 1845, together with Edward Fitzball, incredibly, he had conceived, composed and staged *Maritana.*

Dr Lamb's book deals with each subsequent opera in succession, each with its own chapter, taking in its stride unfinished works, each chapter interspersed with intermezzi of biographical importance concerned with an extraordinarily restless and rootless existence, extra-marital involvements, impetuous European and transatlantic sorties and sophisticated musical contacts (matey evenings drinking punch with Berlioz for example). Few composers could ever have compressed so much living and surviving with incessant composition of high-profile stage works into the most demanding theatrical and social framework possible to imagine.

It is important to stress that this book is essentially a vade-mecum to a composer whose lifestyle and character made him supremely elusive, it is an essay in biography, above all, to register his status in a Bicentenary year. Wallace the composer is present in great detail – those who seek information about his tremendous list of songs, operas and occasional works

will find solace here, as will those who desire reviews, anecdotes and facts. Those who seek a judgment upon his music will have to look elsewhere.

I suspect, in fact that no one will ever get near to the lyrical roots of such a composer we can only detail the worldly events that fed them. A percipient quasi-anonymous voice in Boston during his first stay in the USA sums him up with such a flair that I can only quote it in full:

> "Wallace, natural without being awkward, easy without being rude, confident without presumption and so guarded in his emotions, that the eye alone from time to time betrays them, is a real genius, a diamond of the first water. His peculiar excellence consists in no being in any wise *peculiar*, but general, pervading all he does. All the styles seems alike to him, or rather all styles seem alike at his command, so that on hearing him one is sure to hear what he has heard and most admired in others. Like the gifted bee, Wallace collects the essence of honey from every thing that yields it, and transfers it to his own stock: so that in the ample fare he presents to the public there is always enough to suit individual taste, however fastidious and exacting." [p62]

An admirable view and not unjust. He was skilled, industrious to excess, he knew music at first hand, both a performer and composer, his life was tragic. His operas are enchanting and survive a dating complicit with the ballad forms of his day. He is not contrasted with any other composer in this book, and certainly not contrasted with Michael William Balfe. They knew each other but were not close, "*International*" Wallace indeed was, perhaps to excess, but he was not *quite* the international composer we know Balfe to be and have been. It would not be unjust to claim that the muse of this inveterate traveller invariably stayed at home!

The supreme value of Dr. Lamb's book, in the end, no doubt, is the tantalising list of compositions which conclude, together with a fine bibliography. How much of this music, trapped in the Victorian amber in which it was conceived, will reappear in the years to come is something of a conundrum. Only unchartable changes of taste in the future can supply an answer, but in any event, this neat, comprehensive and immensely readable book will be there at first hand.

Alexander Weatherson

Overleaf

Maria [Marietta]Piccolomini (1834-1899) [see p33] was born in Siena and made her début in London but did not like England at all, her letters are full of bitchy remarks addressed to Parisian fans. She was a Verdian soprano above all but Donizetti's Angelical Harps rang for her on several American tours and she ended up a rich Duchess. The tenor Antonio Giuglini (1827-1865) born in Fano [note the anglo-saxon miss-spelling on this rare print and the fact that he looks more like a head-waiter than Poliuto] sang important roles in London. Alas he lost his reason on a Russian tournée and the celestial harps ceased sounding well before he died at Pesaro. AW