HOW OFTEN DID THEY SING?

by John Black

HOW often the singers of the "Donizetti" era actually performed on the stage is a question more often asked than answered. The availability of the *Programma giornaliera* for Naples provides reliable information, at least for that city, since it gives the full castlist for every performance. This publication was issued daily from 1839 onwards by the Superintendency of Theatres and Performances, and I have extracted details for two consecutive periods, 25 December 1842 to 28 February 1843, and 5 March 1843 to 8 April, the two periods being separated by a period of closure.

I have taken only the two Royal Theatres, the S. Carlo (SC) and the Fondo (F); singers under contract to the management were expected to sing in either theatre as required.

The calender of performances for the first period was as follows:

DATE	THEATRE	OPERA
	1842/3	
Dec 25	SC	SAFFO (Pacini)
26	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA *
27	F	OTELLO (Rossini)
28	SC	SAFFO
29	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
30		No performance
31	F	SORDELLO (Dztti)
Jan 1	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
2		No performance
3	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
4		No performance
5	SC	SAFFO (Pacini)
6	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
7	F	L'ELISIR (Dztti)
8	SC	SAFFO
9		No performance
10	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
11		No performance
	- ALL THEATRES CLOSED -	
19	SC	MARIA PADILLA
20		No performance
21	SC	SAFFO (Pacini)
22	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
23	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
24	SC	MARIA PADILLA
25	SC	SAFFO
26	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
27		No performance
28		No performance

DATE	THEATRE	OPERA
Jan 29	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
Jan 30	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
31		No performance
Feb 1	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
2	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
3	F	I CAPULETI (Bellini)
4	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
5	SC	MARIA PADILLA
6	SC	SAFFO
7	F	SORDELLO
8	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
9	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
10		No performance
11	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
12	F	CHI DURA VINCE (L.Ricci
13	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA
14	SC	SAFFO
15	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
16	SC	LA FIDANZATA CORSA
17	SC	SAFFO
18	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
19	F	L'ELISIR D'AMORE
20	SC	SAFFO
21	F	CHI DURA VINCE
22	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
23	F	L'ELISIR D'AMORE
24	SC	BEATRICE DI TENDA (Belli
25	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
26	F	BEATRICE DI TENDA
27	SC	LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX
28	SC	FIDANZATA CORSA

Setting aside the week of closure in the middle of January there were 59 evenings on which performances could be given, and 49 performances. During this period there were available 3 *prime donne*, Tadolini, Derancourt and Gruitz; 2 *primo tenori*, Fraschini and Basadonna (with Tamberlik still available for occasional performances); the *primo basso* was Colletti, though Massard, who had been a regular principal earlier, sang on a few occasions; I have also noted the performances of the *seconda donna* Salvetti, a member of the company for many years, as was the *comprimario basso* Arati.

Tadolini sang in *La fidanzata corsa, L'Elisir d'amore, Maria Padilla and Linda di Chamounix*, thus singing 31 times - a little more than once every two days. Derancourt sang in *Saffo, Chi dura vince and Beatrice di Tenda*, singing 13 times, rather less than once every four days. Gruitz sang only occasionally, in *Sordello, Maria Padilla, I Capuleti and Beatrice di Tenda*, a total of 7 performances, roughly once every 8 days. Salvetti sang in all operas except *Maria Padilla, I Capuleti and Beatrice di Tenda*, giving 41 performances - two evenings out of three. Fraschini sang in *Saffo, La fidanzata corsa, Sordello and Linda di Chamounix*, 37 performances, on one occasion singing on 6 consecutive evenings, and with an average of more than once every other day. Basadonna sang in *La fidanzata corsa* (which needed two first-rate tenors), *Otello, L'Elisir d'amore and Maria Padilla*, 22 performances in all, roughly once every 3 days. Coletti sang in *Saffo, La fidanzata corsa, Sordello, L'Elisir d'amore, Maria Padilla, Linda di Chamounix and Beatrice di Tenda*, giving 44 performances, about twice in every 3 days, with one run of 8 consecutive evenings. Arati sang in *La fidanzata corsa, Otello, Maria Padilla*, 11 times in all - once every 4 days.

The calendar for the second period was as follows:-

Mar 5	F	*ADELIA (Donizetti)*	
6		*No performance*	
7	SC	*ADELIA*	
8		*No performance*	
9	SC	*(ADELIA*	
		(I CIARLATANI (Cammarano)	
10		*No performance*	
11		*No performance*	
12	SC	*ADELIA*	
13		*No performance*	
14	SC	*(ADELIA*	
		(I CIARLATANI	
Mar 15	F	*(ADELIA*	
		(I CIARLATANI	
16	SC	*(ADELIA Act 2*	
		(GEMMA DI VERGY	
17		*No performance*	
18		*No performance*	
19	SC	*(ADELIA Act 2*	
		(GEMMA DI VERGY	
20	SC	*ADELIA Act 2*	
		GEMMA DI VERGY	
21		*No performance*	
22		*No performance*	

* Pacini.

DATE	THEATRE	OPERA
Mar 23	SC	(I CIARLATANI
		(GEMMA DI VERGY
24		No performance
25		No performance
26	SC	GEMMA DI VERGY
27		No performance
28	SC	ANNA LA PRIE(Battista)
29		No performance
30	SC	ANNA LA PRIE
Mar 31		No performace
Apr 1	F	ANNA LA PRIE
2	SC	ANNA LA PRIE
3	F	ANNA LA PRIE Act 1
4	F	NINA P. D'AMORE (Coppola)
5	F	NINA P. D'AMORE
6	F	NINA P. D'AMORE
7		No performance
8	SC	ANNA LA PRIE

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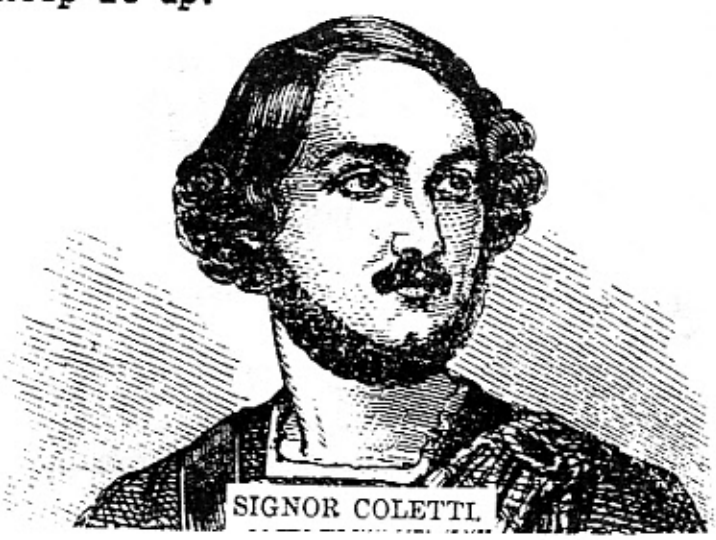
During the period of closure, Tadolini, Basadonna and Coletti left Naples, and the repertoire changed accordingly. Derancourt took most of the *prima donna* roles, singing in *Adelia*, 9 performances in 16 days, after which she sang no more. Her place was taken by Gruitz, who sang in *I ciarlatani and Anna la prie* - 10 performances over the whole period of 35 days, on average twice a week. Salvetti sang in every opera during this period, thus singing on 20 evenings i.e. 2 evenings out of 3. Fraschini sang in *Adelia, Anna la prie & Nina pazza d'amore* on 18 evenings, or roughly every other evening. Tamberlik took the tenor roles in *Gemma di Vergy* and with Fraschini in *Anna la prie*, a total of 11 performances, one every 3 days. Arati sang in *Adelia* and *Gemma di Vergy*, singing on 11 evenings - on 3 of them singing in two different operas.

Without a much fuller investigation, it is not possible to know if these figures are representative of the normal pattern of duty rosters, but there is no reason to suggest that they are not. 'Local regulars' like the *seconda donna* Salvetti would be expected to sing very frequently, and her roles were not taxing to the voice.
The work expected of some of the principals seems to have been very demanding, and it is a tribute to their vocal training that they could keep it up.

(C) J.N. BLACK



SIGNOR COLETTI



MADAME TADOLINI