Adelia o La figlia del bicentenario

Child of his diaspora years, the last of such to emerge from the shadows, Donizetti's *Adelia* has been the crowning achievement of the anniversary celebrations of his *città natale*. An opera by an especially resplendent Donizetti, moving with adroit steps into ever-new territory, ample, confident, comprehensive *melodramma*, no longer restricted by formula of any specific kind, but assured, liberal, open, rejoicing in unfettered eloquence.

This, at least, was the premise. A new-born score, however, seldom is delivered without cries of protest (in this case from the spectators) and it needed careful nursing over three *repliche* before the baby emerged with a suitably smiling face. The first impression of the music (I heard the Dress Rehearsal and the *prima*) was strangely impersonal, a skittish overture followed by an elegantly structured score but curiously all-purpose and not always very appropriate to the dramatic situation - or so it seemed. But then griping is something we should expect, Maestro Kuhn was not really to blame for several hiccups, the music needed coaxing, and it is not unjust to say that the cradle was being rocked by an uneven hand. All kinds of hazards had upset the casting over the preceeding weeks, *primedonne* had come and gone, both the bass and tenor were last minute replacements and in the circumstances applied themselves heroically to music far from easy to learn or sing. The score: the *sinfonia* (had it escaped from *La Fille du régiment* ?) led one to believe that a more irreverent opera was to follow, but then *Adelia* is an *opera seria in tre atti.* Frequent recourse to earlier compositions (from the revised version of *Gabriella di Vergy* for instance - unperformed in 1841 - and therefore not strictly describable as "Reminiscencies") was not really upsetting, indeed such music was very smoothly incorporated. The *Introduzione* to Act I, one of the most confident I have heard, with a tripartite coro vividly framing a bipartite aria for basso of immaculate vintage, went well. The soprano's *cavatina* was attractive if not quite memorable, and the *concertato* suitably vociferous and ironic. Act II was especially demanding, Adelia (Giuseppina Strepponi had plenty of good reasons for losing her voice) opening with a grand aria, followed by two big duets (with tenor, and then with bass - this last of very novel construction and turning into a trio followed by an absolutely compulsive ensemble). It may well be that this act has the best of the music. Act III, in contrast, is rather truncated in terms of time, but long on emotion and drama; prefaced by an incongrously jaunty male chorus (very engagingly orchestrated) the tenor has a solo of exceptional beauty and difficulty; the soprano is obliged almost to climb the wall such is the virtuosity required of her; and the happy ending has the usual slightly anti-climactic effect, rather like applying a bandage to a mortal wound.

Gustav Kuhn got the measure of the music in the end, the same cannot be said for the production which resolutely ignored all the instructions printed in the libretto as well as the sense of the plot. The decor: (*Regia, scene* and *costumi* were by Beni Montresor) was handsome but antiseptic and with a baroque disdain for romantic disorder - all mirors and transparency with an input of nostalgic Fornasetti-like architectural kitsch which turned its back on the claustrophobic infighting going on vocally. The costumes were simply nonsensical. Adelia was dressed like a duchess from the start (she is supposed to be a simple country girl marrying above her station [see the **Riassunto**

(*opposite*) Alexandrina Pendatchanska in the torinese offering to the bicentenary (as Elisabetta in *Roberto Devereux*). Courtesy Teatro Regio, Torino

which follows]) and the female *coristi,* though given some eloquent music by the composer, were reduced, visually at least, to mere pawns in the game. There were many oddities too; Adelia appeared to be in love with her miserable father, pawing him continually while Oliviero opened his handsome arms in vain. It is true that Romani's exceptionally silly plot has disturbingly incestuous overtones but this is going too far. (His earlier version for Coccia - *La figlia dell'arciere* of 1834, composed for Malibran - had much stronger situations but I suspect that Donizetti found the ending too much like that of *Pia de'Tolomei*). To cap it all a gibbet appeared for Oliviero in Act II (which just shows how much the librettist knew about feudal France!).

All these trifles came together to sap any "tinta" the composer might have intended, especially in a score which is sometimes unwontedly cheerful. The performance: the Adelia of Daniela Longhi was subject to packaged vehemence but she displayed real commitment to the very arduous role, her voice was a bit all-purpose too, and a bit coarse, not quite encompassing the expressive vocabulary required. Her *aria-finale* was well-sustained but she took far too many liberties with the *fioriture.* Marcello Bedoni, as Oliviero, has a refined voice and style, is intelligent and musical and has a virile stage-presence. He epitomised an innocence and youth not in any way innappropriate to the role and his terrifying Act III aria was sung with wonderful courage, daring a coven of unrealistic claqueurs. It cannot be held against him if he was obliged to assume the outsize clothes designed for a gigantic predecessor (his *concittadino* Lorenzo Salvi) at short notice. The foolish antics of a few self-styled "experts" having a day out from La Scala reflect only their irrelevance, he did well and will go on to a fine career. Andrea Silvestrelli as Arnoldo, the stiff-necked lunatic of a father who does not hesitate to denounce his daughter to assuage his pride (to put it politely), was suitably throaty and rather short of the required accomplishment. One was continually reminded of all the good Italian voices that could have done justice to this role, whereas the unique voice for the tenor is only in heaven - high in the stave, twinning force with delicacy, God help us, and with a resonance and volume at the drop of a hat. Stefano Antonucci was as usual highly professional in his brief role of the dissimulating duke. The problem was the lack of balance in these voices, unequal dynamics led to a combined inability to sing softly, thus most of Donizetti's careful part-writing went for nothing. Special praise should go to the well disposed *coro* and its Maestro who met some of Donizetti's most challenging demands, they added the necessary animation to a staging which was was generally too frigid. The opera now goes on to revival (at Genoa) with a different cast. Bergamo's bicentenary offering has been presented with resolution putting a term to the parabola of his mature compositions; Roger Parker's revision of the score will bring pleasure to *donizettiani* everywhere - as people will discover when they have the opportunity to reconsider this music.

When we have got *Adelia* on the shelves we shall have only a handful of further discoveries to seek out and relish, some of them (*Alahor in Granata, Otto mesi in due ore*) will be within reach soon. Begamo's son's (adoptive and otherwise) have great stamina we note to our satisfaction, and they number among them - not just Mayr and Donizetti - not just the legion of great singers that came from the Lombardy hills but also those who are called to grasp the operatic nettle in that city with panache and flair

Alexander Weatherson

Riassunto dell'opera

Atto primo - L'azione si svolge a Perona, residenza del duca di Borgogna. La casa del capo degli arcieri francesi, Arnoldo, è violata da un giovane di nobile schiatta: si tratta di Oliviero, conte di Fienna, che si è introdotto nella camera di Adelia, bella figlia del militare.
Arnoldo vuole giustizia, e va dal duca Carlo a denunciare l'accaduto, dal momento che una legge vieta ai nobili di avere relazioni sentimentali con i rappresentanti del volgo. Pena ai trasgressori è la morte. Davanti al duca, Adelia ed Oliviero si disperano: quella legge iniqua distrugge il loro amore. Arnoldo, nel vedere la disperazione dei due giovani, comprende le loro ragioni e intercede affinché ad Oliviero sia salvata la vita, spingendosi addirittura a chiederne la mano per la figlia. Ma il duca Carlo è furente: mai concederebbe ad un aristocratico di rovinare la discendenza mischiandosi con una plebea. Finge tuttavia di accordare il permesso.

Atto secondo - Il duca nutre in realtà il segreto proposito di far giustiziare il conte durante la cerimonia. Ma Adelia viene avvertita dei propositi del duca da una lettera di un cortigiano amico di Oliviero, Comino: l'unico modo per salvare Oliviero è di rimandare le nozze per aspettare nuovi sviluppi. Quando Arnoldo e Oliviero apprendono la volontà di Adelia di differire la cerimonia, inveiscono furibondi contro di lei. La giovane, vinta dalle troppe emozioni, perde i sensi.

Atto terzo - Le nozze non hanno luogo, e i tumultuosi eventi hanno scosso la mente di Adelia, che ormai vaneggia ossessionata dall'idea che Oliviero possa morire per causa sua. Ma una notizia riesce a farle recuperare il senno: il duca, apparentemente giunto a più miti consigli, ha deciso di dare un titolo nobiliare a suo padre Arnoldo. Finalmente, nel tripudio generale, i due giovani possono convolare a giuste nozze, sotto lo sguardo altero del duca.

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Regione Lombardia
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Camera di Commercio Industria
Artigianato e Agricoltura di Bergamo

Sotto l'Alto Patronato del Presidente della Repubblica

STAGIONE LIRICA AUTUNNALE 1997

DEDICATA A GAETANO DONIZETTI NEL SECONDO CENTENARIO DELLA NASCITA

Venerdì 26 settembre ore 20,30 (Turno A)
Sabato 27 settembre ore 20,30 (Turno B) Domenica 28 settembre ore 15,30 (Turno C)

ADELIA

Opera seria in tre atti di Felice Romani e Girolamo Maria Marini
***Musica di* Gaetano Donizetti**
Prima riproposta nell'edizione critica di Casa Ricordi a cura di Roger Parker

Personaggi	*Interpreti*
Carlo, duca di Borgogna	***Stefano Antonucci*** *(26 e 28)* ***Sergio Bologna*** *(27)*
Oliviero, conte di Fienna	***Marcello Bedoni*** *(26 e 28)* *(27)*
Arnoldo	***Andrea Silvestrelli*** *(26 e 28)* ***Alessandro Svab*** *(27)*
Adelia	***Daniela Longhi*** *(26 e 28)* ***Paola Antonucci*** *(27)*
Comino, ciambellano del duca	***Silvano Paolillo*** *(26 e 28)* ***Cristiano Olivieri*** *(27)*
Odetta, amica di Adelia	***Serena Farnocchia***
Uno scudiero di Oliviero	***Cristiano Olivieri*** *(26 e 28)* ***Silvano Paolillo*** *(27)*

Direttore: **Gustav Kuhn** (26 e 28) / **Marco Boemi** (27)
Regia, scene, costumi e luci **Beni Montresor**
Maestro del coro **Valentino Metti**
Aiuto regista Gaetano Miglioranzi *Aiuto Scenografo* Manuel Vassanelli
Aiuto Costumista Franco Giambenini *Dipinti* Paolino Libralato
Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano "Giuseppe Verdi"
Coro del Circuito Lirico Lombardo
Nuovo allestimento in coproduzione con l'E.A. Teatro Comunale dell'Opera Carlo Felice di Genova
Direttore di palcoscenico: Gianluigi Cerea
Maestri collaboratori: Vito Lombardi, Danilo Lombardini, Piercarlo Orizio, Samuele Pala, Roberto Rizzi
Direttore dell'allestimento scenico: Angelo Lontani
Realizzatore delle luci: Roberto Manca - *Capo sarta:* Adelia Bevilacqua

Fornitori: *Costumi* C.T.C. Milano e E.A. Teatro alla Scala di Milano - *Parrucche:* Audello, Torino
Calzature: Pedrazzoli, Milano - *Attrezzeria:* Rancati, Milano

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