Insertion Arias for *L'elisir d'amore*

- Persiani, Tamburini, and...

One of the articles in the programme for the recent (and delightful) production of *L'elisir d'amore* at Covent Garden mentioned that Donizetti added new arias for Antonio Tamburini and Fanny Tacchinardi-Persiani for the Paris production in 1839. The music for these additional arias can be found as supplements in a vocal score published by Bernard Latte, Paris, a copy of which is held by the British Library.

That for Persiani came as a surprise. The words of the first section, with the single change of "cangi" to "plachi" are still those for the original "Prendi per me sei libero". But the cabaletta is in fact the cabaletta from Bianca's Act I aria "No, no che infelice appieno" in *Ugo, Conte di Parigi*, the music lifted without any very significant change, and with some new words apposite to *Elisir* as follows:

Ugo	*Elisir* (for Persiani)
Bianca: No, che infelice appieno	Adina: No, che infelice appieno
Non mi volesti, o fato,	non mi volesti, o fato,
Se ritrovar mi è dato	Se riacquistar m'è dato
Il mio coraggio ancor.	chi mi fé lieta ognor
Vola d'Adelia in seno,	ah torna a brillarmi in seno
Ah vola alla speme, o cor.	ah torna alla gioja il cor.
Chor: Dall'Aquitania giunge	Adina: O gioja inesprimibile
vedi, vedi, vedi, vedi	o fortunato amor
Bianca: Oh gioja	o gioja

Of course I shouldn't have been surprised as Jeremy Commons' booklet notes for the Opera Rara CDs of *Ugo* inform us that Bianca's *sortita* was used as an *aria di baule* by Persiani in *Elisir* and by Pasta in *Anna Bolena*. The renown of these substitute arias was clearly widespread and they were adapted for instrumental works, with their titles referring to the arias' new positions. For example, in a collection of pieces for harp by Gustavus V Holst (grandfather of the Holst of *Planets* fame, the V is for von) we find:

> Donizetti's Favourite Cavatina "No, no che infelice appieno", Introduced by Madame Pasta in Anna Bolena, Arranged for the Harp and Dedicated to Miss Mary Jane Wiggin, by Gustavus V Holst.

Then there is a Piano Fantasy by Alkan, "Variations a à la vielle, sur un air de l'Elisire d'Amore", whose theme is this *Ugo* cabaletta. And one Louis Messemaeckers wrote a "Fantaisie et Variations pour Piano, sur l'air chanté par Madame Persiani dans L'Elisire d'Amore de Donizetti dédiées a Monsieur le Comte Gaston Errembault de Dudzeele". After an introduction, the theme of the piece is, again, none other than Bianca's cabaletta. There are then two variations on it followed by a larghetto in G minor, which is simply "Una furtiva lagrima", and a Finale based on Adina's line from the Adina/Dulcamara duet in Act II.

The extra aria for Tamburini takes Belcore's music from the cabaletta of the Nemorino/Belcore duet in Act II and elaborates it into a full-scale cabaletta. The words are new:

Elisir (original)	*Elisir* (for Tamburini)
Qua la mano, giovinotto	Bravo, bravo il mio Belcore
dell'acquisto mi consolo	del tuo genio è questo un lampo
in complesso, sopra e sotto,	tu sei destro nell'amore
tu mi sembri un buon figliuolo.	Come forte sei nel campo
Sarai presto caporale	sarai presto generale
se mi prende, se mi prende ad esemplar.	col tuo genio col tuo genio singolar.
Ho ingaggiato il mio rivale	Ho ingaggiato il mio rivale
anche questa è da contar, si.	anche questa è da contar, si.

Presumably the new piece replaces the final section of the duet. Clearly Belcore is on stage alone in the revised version, addressing himself with no little pride. Where originally he tells Nemorino that he, Nemorino, will soon be a corporal, in the revision he foresees himself as no less than a general! The new music concentrates on the first line and the last two lines of text. The triplets of the original are extended into an elaborate display piece for the virtuoso baritone. The stretta contains a passage of sixteen triplets followed, in four notes, by leaps of a twelfth, tenth and a ninth (high F down to B♭, back up to D and down to C). The Paris Nemorino in January 1839 was Nicola Ivanoff, and one wonders how he felt at losing his music.

... and Malibran in the light of Cecilia Bartoli

The new Decca CD from Cecilia Bartoli, "Maria", devoted to the famous mezzo Maria Malibran, also contains an aria for insertion into *L'elisir d'amore*. Two claims are made for this: that the aria was written by Malibran and that this is a world premiere recording. The second of these claims is only partially true. The first section of the aria may well be appearing for the very first time, but the second certainly isn't. Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonynge used it in their 1971 recording of *L'elisir d'amore*, though admittedly in an orchestration by Douglas Gamley that sounds a little out of period. Sutherland also sings two verses whereas Bartoli gives us only one. This isn't the first time that Decca has forgotten their own recordings: the two-CD compilation issued to mark Sutherland's 80th birthday claimed that this was the first time that the complete *scena* from *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* had been issued on CD (it was originally a supplement to her first LP recording of *Lucia*), whereas in fact it appears, all of it, on "Prima Donna Assoluta" (Decca 425 605-2, released in 1989).

From the LP booklet it is clear that Bonynge thought this replacement aria was written by Malibran's husband, Charles de Bériot. The book that accompanies "Maria" comes down strongly in favour of Malibran herself. I wonder? Is it really a misreading to interpret "M. de Bériot" as Monsieur de Bériot rather than Maria? (I presume that the score with this is the one Bonynge found.) And is it really "strongly supporting" evidence that sister Pauline performed it as "Grosse Arie von Malibran" in Berlin in 1848? A British Library score of *L'elisir* published by Bernard Latte of Paris, to which are attached as appendices the Persiani and Tamburini arias discussed above, has the following pencil annotation on the title page (alas unsigned and undated):

> La 1ère édition de "L'Elisire d'Amore" est l'une de Pacini,[1] probablement en 1832. Celà édition comptait 200 pages. Les 2 airs ajoutés dans cette édition n'y figuraient

[1] The Parisian music publisher, not the composer.

pas, à ma connaissance il ne figurent que dans l'édition présente. A cette partition est présent l'air "Prendi per me" avec une nouvelle musique de Charles de Bériot, composé exprès pour Maria Malibran; Donizetti avait écrit une musique de cet air pour Me Persiani.

[The first edition of l'Elisir d'amore is the one of Pacini probably of 1832. That edition had 200 pages. The 2 added airs in this edition were not included; in my belief they are included only in this edition. In this score is present the air "Prendi per me" with new music by Charles de Bériot written expressly for Maria Malibran; Donizetti had composed a similar air for Madame Persiani.]

I am indebted to our Chairman for deciphering some of the French and for the translation. He also points out that there are inaccuracies in the statement and mistakes in the French, leading him to the conclusion that the writer was probably a bookseller and not French. However, it surely does reveal that someone then thought that De Bériot did write a replacement for "Prendi per me". If it isn't the one recorded by Bartoli, what and where is it?

A second area of concern is that there seems to me to be some rather dubious justification for Bartoli's assumption of the roles of Amina and Norma. "Ah, non credea" may lie well for a mezzo, but I have doubts that the Act I aria would, especially the cabaletta, even at the slightly lower pitch used. And is there any real evidence that "Amina's tessitura ... for the most part, is uncomfortably low for sopranos"? I'm more inclined to believe that Bellini tailored these parts to the vocal qualities of Pasta, and that modern interpreters of them such as Callas and Sutherland come closer vocally to the requirements of the complete roles than does a mezzo such as Bartoli. There are passages in *Norma* that demand a soprano's ease on high (the cabaletta to "Casta Diva", the Act I confrontation with Pollione, the end of "Ei tornera", etc.) and I don't imagine a mezzo such as Bartoli in these with pleasure. "Casta Diva" itself may gain from intimacy, but Norma also needs to evince authority, even at prayer. Max Loppert's description of this (Opera, November 2007) as microphone crooning seems all too apt.

The musical text for "Ah! non giunge" is interesting. Bartoli sings the 'plain' version of the first verse that is so expressive of Amina's joy (something I first heard sung by Margherita Rinaldi in 1972 at Bregenz) and then provides some lovely decorations for the second that exploit the lower range of her voice, rather than the usual higher variations. Unfortunately we are given only one verse of "Vien diletto", the cabaletta from the *I puritani* mad scene, in the Malibran version which transposes the music down a minor third from the usual key. I would have been interested to hear a second verse decorated in similar vein. The Pacini excerpt from *Irene* also has only one verse of its cabaletta (though the stretta seems full). If my perception of Malibran as a singer who was capable of improvising variants and cadenzas at will is correct, then it seems a pity to deny us these second verses and their decorations, especially in a recording when questions of stamina through a complete opera don't arise. Malibran's "Rataplan" is also shorn of a verse if the British Library's volume that contains it, "Pensées de Malibran", is authentic – this is a collection of 14 songs and duets. Decca and Ms Bartoli would no doubt that point to the fact their CD lasts just a few seconds short of 80 minutes and ask me which tracks I would give up to accommodate these repeats. My reply would be that in an ideal world we would have two CDs (remember

those wonderful 2-LP sets Decca issued of Sutherland, Horne and Crespin?) with the second devoted solely to the music of Garcia and Malibran!

You may gather from the above that I am less taken by this Bartoli CD than our Chairman (see Newsletter 102). I find too much that is exaggerated. "Ah! non giunge" is so clipped it made me laugh on first hearing, and when she gets to "Ah! m'abbrrrrrraccia!" Elvino must surely be thinking that Lisa wasn't such a bad proposition after all. And that rather breathy little-girl tone seems either inapt for the music or inadequate for a large hall, or both. Having said all that, her Barbican concert (19th December) was magnificent. There, the exaggerations were largely avoided, or at least were much less evident, and what sounds like crooning on the CD came across live as a properly supported and projected pianissimo. Only occasionally was her not large voice submerged by the orchestra (explained by an announcement at the start begging our indulgence for her still recovering from a cold and flu? – perhaps the repeat performance two days later was stronger). If she uses different techniques for recording and live performances I regret it. If she doesn't, and I hope this is the case, Decca's close recording does her no favours. Her virtuosity is actually more dazzling when heard at a reasonable distance.

Alan Jackson

Opportune, no doubt, in view of the above is a modest CD from Venice and recently issued

Maria Felicita Garcia Malibran a Venezia

(Alessandri et Scattaglia 2007 SHC 9700)

which is a compilation disc of songs and duets composed by Malibran, half in Italian and half in French (though vocally somewhat dim where the latter is concerned). They supply considerable material for thought in respect of the famous but elusive diva. Charming, lightweight trifles for the most part, skirting rather than submitting to emotion, not especially melodious, with the duets more vocally sophisticated than the solo songs. Despite a bold flourish now and then they were intended for salon usage by the celebrated artist herself one imagines, with their elementary arpeggiesque accompaniments.. Many of these adroit items, however watery, cannot be claimed by Venice however as most were offered by Ricordi in the first place: *Il mattino* in her lifetime, five of the others *Prière à la Madonna, Hymne des matelots, Au bord de la mer, Addio a Nice* and *Le Montagnard* after her death in an album of November 1837 called *Dernières pensées musicales* All the above published (as they are sung here) in a G clef their substance reduced by the preponderance of soprano voices (Mme Bartoli has made her her point vis-à-vis the Malibran sound) The documentation accompaying this disc includes details of the Malibran repertoire in Venice in her celebrated tournée of March 1835, eight performances - seven of which include Balfe or his wife Lina Roser in a key role. Recommended listening for the vocally inquisitive ...