LURLINE by W V Wallace

Little has been heard of this forgotten opera for almost 100 years yet in its time the critics regarded this work as surpassing Wallace's highly successful *Maritana* (1845). The Pyne and Harrison Royal English Opera presented it at Covent Garden on February 23rd, 1860 with considerable success. Critics proclaimed it 'a little short of a triumph' and it played to packed houses for two seasons before going on tour. Later in the century, it toured with the Carl Rosa Opera Company, at least until 1890, and with the Walsham Opera Company. This is a work that 19th century opera enthusiast Richard Bonynge has always wished to direct, yet which the mainstream record companies were not prepared to risk. However, in June 2009, Victorian Opera Northwest, in line with their mission to record neglected Victorian works, teamed up to record *Lurline* with Maestro Bonynge and a group of world class singers: Sally Silver, Keith Lewis, David Soar, Donald Maxwell, Fiona Janes, Roderick Earle, Bernadette Cullen and Paul Ferris.

Although band parts existed in the Carl Rosa and RTÉ libraries, they were incomplete and nobody knew where the autograph resided is until David Grant of Waterford carried out his research. His perseverance located the autograph in Brussels and so a new set of band parts could be generated for Richard Bonynge and allow the recording to go ahead. Unusually, Gèrard of Paris had published the overture in full score and with band parts. But why Paris? Wallace and Berlioz were known to be good friends and it seems that there was discussion of playing *Lurline* there around the time of the London première.



Wallace's autograph revealed some surprises. Most of the score was completed between 1847-8 during a period when Wallace took his *Maritana* to the Imperial Theatre in Vienna. Certainly, *Lurline*'s story based on the 'Lorelei' legend would have been vividly in his mind and he may even have visited the Rhine with its Lorelei Rock during his stay. There was an intention to perform it at Drury Lane but Alfred Bunn gave up the management in 1847 and the opera was put on hold. Wallace's biographers refer to an eye problem, which may have caused delays and precluded him from looking to other outlets. Then, ever restless, he went off to South America for some years. Then in 1859 he revised Fitzball's book, as evidenced by the libretto lodged with the Lord Chamberlain for licensing purposes. The original libretto on blue paper has crossings out and inserts attached. They reveal that the recitatives, necessary to carry the plot, were shortened in the rewriting resulting in a more compact flow to the action. Unusually for English opera of the time it was through-composed. The recording is being issued by Naxos in a 2CD set under catalogue number, **8.660293-94** during June/July 2010 at their usual bargain price of £10. The accompanying booklet contains essays, synopsis, illustrations and singers' biographies.

Victorian Opera can provide a modern printing of the Lurline vocal score [£25], and two forms of the full libretto: one is a facsimile of the A5 Covent Garden 'book of words' 56pp [£6], and the other a 40pp CD booklet with full libretto and notes [£3]. These are available from Raymond J Walker, Victorian Opera Northwest, 6 Lindow Fold, Wilmslow, SK9 6DT, UK. Further information on both Victorian Opera Northwest and our recordings can be found at www.victorianoperanorthwest.org.

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