

CAUSES AND EFFECTS (Part 2)

Wagner's famous verdict on the music of Meyerbeer (that it represented effects without causes) came to mind (again, see Newsletter 88 page 11) in the period of post-operatic contemplation following the staging of Alessandro Nini's *La Marescialla d'Ancre* at Jesi in September. The thought had probably been prompted more by the production rather than by the stunning music, although it would be fair to say that neither director nor composer had been in complete command of the sprawling and complex historical events on which it was based. But they had told it with panache and with some disregard for the compromises necessary for clear understanding of staged events so wisely observed by such a wily theatrical trouper as Giuseppe Verdi.

And it will be Verdi's name on everyone's lips when they talk of Nini's tragedia lirica (it seemed more like a melodrama during the performances). The pre-echoes of *Trovatore* are enough to throw new light on Verdi's musical originality (no surprise that!) But the other surprise lies in the commitment to a continuation of the golden age of Bel Canto (more surprising in 1839). It should make us all ponder the possibility that there might have been an alternative future on offer in that mellifluous year for the lyric genre than the one we have actually trodden in the company of Chevalier Verdi and Herr Wagner (and their many heirs). All that cinematic illusion accompanied by musical snapshots is becoming pallid for those brought up on Star Wars and Lord of the Rings.

Maybe it's time to get back to big voices singing big tunes..... Fine by me!

Douglas Bennett

(just back from the Blackout in Jesi having seen the light)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Donizetti Society will take place in London on Saturday 13 December 2003. Will those members wishing to attend kindly indicate their intention to the Secretary at their earliest convenience?

