

G. Donizetti



Pia de' Tolomei

GREATER LONDON COUNCIL

THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL, LONDON

(Director: George Mann, O.B.E.)

SUNDAY, 26th FEBRUARY, 1978, at 7.15 p.m.

K. O. C. S. PRESENTS PRO OPERA

In Association with The Donizetti Society

The first performance in this country of

DONIZETTI'S

PIA DE' TOLOMEI

Sung in Italian

OPERA IN TWO ACTS WITH LIBRETTO BY SALVATORE CAMMARANO

In the gracious presence of H.E. the Italian Ambassador and Signora Ducci

NELLO DELLA PIETRA JONATHAN SUMMERS

PIA his wife LOIS McDONALL

GHINO DEGLI ARMIERI ANTHONY RODEN

RODRIGO DEGLI ARMIERI DELLA JONES

PIERO A hermit JOHN TOMLINSON

LAMBERTO Old servant of the Tolomeis

BICE Pia's confidant MERRIL JENKINS

UBALDO Nello's servant ARMISTEAD WILKINSON

With the PRO OPERA CHORUS (Chorus Mistress: Rosemary Barnes)

and the

PRO OPERA ORCHESTRA (Leader: John Bacon)

Conductor: LESLIE HEAD

Lois McDonall, Della Jones and John Tomlinson appear by kind permission of The English National Opera.

Jonathan Summers by kind permission of The Royal Opera, Covent Garden

Cover: Giorgio Ronconi in the role of Nello (Opera Rara Collection)

Interval: 20 minutes

Programme 30p

Pia de' Tolomei

Pia de' Tolomei was the 56th of Donizetti's some 70 operas and was composed towards the end of 1836 and early in 1837 for Venice during the period of the composer's maturity. Lucia di Lammermoor was premiered at Naples in 1835 and this was followed in 1836 by Belisario at Venice, Il campanello, Betty and L'assedio di Calais, all for Naples. Pia de' Tolomei was followed later in 1837 by Roberto Devereux, again written for Naples.

The basis of Salvatore Cammarano's libretto for Donizetti was a narrative poem by Bartolomeo Sestini, itself based on the brief utterance in Dante "Ricorditi di me, che son la Pia; Siena me fè, disfecemi Maremma" (Purgatorio, Canto V).

Pia is the wife of Nello (baritone), a Ghibelline. Her brother Rodrigo (musico), is a Guelph captain and Nello's cousin Ghino (tenor), is madly in love with Pia. However she spurns Ghino who then persuades Nello that his wife is unfaithful. Believing Ghino he has Pia imprisoned and then poisoned. When Nello discovers his cousin's perfidy he arrives as Pia is dying.

Donizetti was commissioned in 1836 to write an opera for La Fenice in Venice by its impresario Alessandro Lanari. The negotiations over Donizetti's fee were troublesome and then Count Berti, the president of La Fenice insisted on the inclusion of a role for his protégée, the mezzo-soprano Rosina Mazzarelli. Further problems arose when La Fenice was destroyed by fire on the night of 12 December and Donizetti half expected the management to break his contract. However the performances were transferred to the Teatro Apollo, and not only was the season late in starting but further delays occurred when the baritone Celestino Salvatori fell ill and was replaced by Giorgio Ronconi.

Finally the first performance of Pia de' Tolomei was given on 18 February 1837 with Fanny Tacchinardi Persiani (the 1st Lucia) as Pia, Rosina Mazzarelli as Rodrigo, Antonio Poggi as Ghino and Giorgio Ronconi (later to be the 1st Nabucco) as Nello.

The opera was a success but not a spectacular one and Lanari writing on 25 February said "As a whole, the opera continues to please, especially the duet in the first act and all of Ronconi's scena". However he also said

"The noisy stretta of the finale (to Act 1) does not produce any effect". Donizetti had already agreed to write a new finale for this act and it was introduced into Pia when the opera was performed at Sinigaglia and Lucca in July with Eugenia Tadolini singing the title role and Napoleone Moriani as Ghino. The other main feature of these performances was the reassignment of the part of Rodrigo to a tenor, and the removal of all his solo music.

For the Rome and Milan productions, Moriani was joined by Giuseppina Strepponi (Verdi's future second wife) as Pia, but when the opera was given at Naples in October 1838 with Ronzi de Begnis, Donizetti made some further alterations, including a revised ending.

When the opera was performed at Florence in 1842 a contemporary critic wrote "People have said that Pia is not one of Donizetti's most beautiful operas, yet it is marked by a sweet melancholy which seizes one, which touches the heart-in the choruses, in the tenor aria, the introduction, the finales, the duet with the contralto; indeed, there are very many things in it which moved me....."

The opera seems to have disappeared from the Italian repertory for the next 17 years although during this period it was given in Barcelona (1844-45), Lisbon (1847), Malta (1854-55) and Oporto (1859). Finally it was revived in Italy at Parma in 1858 and then apparently not again until appropriately at Siena in 1967. Pia was sung by Jolanda Meneguzzer, Nello by Walter Alberti, Rodrigo by Florindo Andreolli and Ghino by Aldo Bottion. The two performances on 3 and 5 September were conducted by Bruno Rigacci who had prepared the edition. The following March saw this production repeated at Bologna and Budrio with mainly the same singers but with Ondina Otta singing Pia at some performances. Some time later Italian-Swiss Radio made a studio recording with Jolanda Meneguzzer (Pia), Franco Pagliuzzi (Nello), Rodolfo Malacarne (Rodrigo). Giuseppe Baratti (Ghino).

All these performances and the studio recording were conducted by Bruno Rigacci but when he came to make another studio recording, this time for RAI on 30 October 1976, he restored the mezzo-soprano role of Rodrigo but did not include all his/her music. The cast for this recording was Lella Cuberli (Pia). Benedetta Pecchioli (Rodrigo), Giulio Fioravanti (Nello), and Renzo Casellato (Ghino).

The opera does not appear to have been performed in Great Britain but the BBC broadcast a recording of the 1967 Siena production on 29 May 1969 and extracts from the Italian-Swiss Radio tape on 4 July 1971.

Bruno Rigacci's edition was based on the composer's autograph score in the Naples Conservatory and on early copies. One great success of the Siena production was the aria for Piero, the Hermit, fashioned by Rigacci from the E major prayer in the second act into a solo with choral responses. This unison prayer for male voices, 'Divo spirto' has been rightly described by Winton Dean as being 'fully the equal of the famous prayers in Mosè and Nabucco'.

Andrew Porter writing in the Financial Times at the time of the Siena performances said "Pia de' Tolomei is not one of Donizetti's strongest operas, because the plot turns on a creaky hinge (the dramatic weaknesses all centre on the intrusive Mazzarelli - Rodrigo); but the three principal characters, the soprano, tenor and baritone, are drawn in music of considerable dramatic power and often of great beauty. The most striking features of the score are not the set arias but the ariosos; something more than accompanied recitative, melodies forged in the stress of emotion, pouring out with Verdian prodigality, then yielding to others when the situation changes. The first scene contains a famous example; for Ghino, the phrase to which Verdi later set 'Amami, Alfredo, amami quanti io t' amo,' and then two pages later, while the tenor is singing a different line, an orchestral reminiscence of this outburst. A little later, between Pia's aria and her cabaletta the usual transition passage of messenger-arriving-with-the-news is an admirably composed episode starting in B flat minor - vigorous tune in the strings while the breathless messenger mutters detached sotto voce phrases - then bursting into the major, strings in octaves with the voice, as his announcement reaches its joyful climax. The prelude and opening dialogue of the next scene are accompanied by a conventional little 'mounting tension' motif whose harmonic and rhythmic adventures soon become far from conventional, and which then recurs in further guises for the link-passage between the sections of the ensuing duet. But the finest of all, in this vein, is the tenor's death scene as he arrives, messenger-with-news, between the baritone's aria and cabaletta (aria of grief, for Nello still loves the wife he has sentenced to death; cabaletta of hope that she can still be saved). Ghino confesses his guilt, declares Pia's innocence, in a phrase that opens with a broad rising seventh, runs down,

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION : During tests in the Hall, a note played *mezzoforte* on the horn measured approximately 65 decibels/db(A)/ of sound. A single, uncovered cough gave the same reading. A handkerchief placed over the mouth when coughing assists in obtaining a *pianissimo*.

NO SMOKING IN THE AUDITORIUM.

THE TAKING OF PHOTOGRAPHS IS NOT PERMITTED.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GREATER LONDON COUNCIL : Persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating or to sit in any of the other gangways.

FIRST AID FACILITIES are provided by the British Red Cross Society.

Members of the public are reminded that no tape recorder or other type of recording apparatus may be brought into the auditorium. It is illegal to record any performance, or part thereof, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director and concert promoter concerned.

breaks into detached chromatic utterance, at the fourth appearance collapsing into the minor. Donizetti told his father-in-law that he would certainly be moved to tears by the death of Ghino; and at La Scala Moriani was so moving that 'the corpse had to be recalled for applause three times'.

The final scene - in Pia's prison - opens with a long E minor pantomime - Pia asleep, gaoler with poison-based on a flute solo that recurs, in altered forms, when Pia starts out of and recounts her nightmare. Her dramatic recitative leads to a cantabile, then a cavatina. Nello arrives, the leaping syncopations of an 'unexpected joy' motif are suddenly arrested on a tonal, then a semitonal alteration as the poison begins to work. The final cabaletta is as usual in two verses, but in the first the melody is legato over a smooth accompaniment; in the second, broken by rests, over detached chords.

All these things, and dozens more, show Donizetti as a dramatic composer of more resource, subtlety and musical richness than he is often allowed. There are also four strategically placed choruses, three of them for male voices. The first, a likeable tune leaping backwards and forth over sevenths, and enclosing a solo for a minor character, begins the opera. Pia's entry is formally heralded by a pretty 'coro di damigelle' (which turns up again in La favorite to introduce that heroine). The final scene of Act 1 opens with a hiding-in-the-darkness number in stealthy catlike tread over the Surprise symphony tune. Everything is set indoors until the scene of the denouement; then we move to a hermitage, a storm, a stark octave chorus which Barblan justly compares with Mussorgsky, and a broad E major prayer.

The formal numbers are of a more markedly Bellinian cast than those of any other Donizetti opera I know. I puritani has lent its inspiration to many of the melodies, and Norma and Adalgisa twine in the E major duet for Pia and her mezzo brother. For many people (me among them) a Donizetti sequence of shapely, varied arias and duets, limpid cavatina and fiery cabaletta, composed to the excellent formulas of the 1830s, can provide pleasure enough for an evening. Set within the powerfully dramatic arioso and recitative that distinguish Pia, they form part of an opera unusually interesting and rich by any standards. We are only a step away from Verdi, and arias which belong as completely to the individual who sings them as, here, does the character-creating music around the arias".

Tonight's edition has been prepared by Leslie Head from the Rigacci score used at Siena with all the solo music for Rodrigo restored from the composer's autograph. This includes the dungeon scene in Part I and the opening scene of Part II probably not performed since the middle of the last century. Also restored is the trio section for Nello, Ghino and Bice which begins the last scene of Part 1. The musical material for these restorations has been made by Urs Schaffer.

John Watts.
Chairman, Donizetti Society.



Cramer

London's Leading Music shop is
at 99 St Martins Lane WC 2N 4AZ.
01-240 1612.

SYNOPSIS

The Action takes place in and near Siena, in 1260

Part 1 Pia's apartments. Ubaldo, Ghino's faithful follower, has intercepted Scene 1 a letter stating that a mysterious man is planning to secretly visit Pia that night. Ghino loves Pia although she is married to his cousin, Nello. Bice brings word that Pia has forbidden Ghino to see her and insults Ghino in the process. He resolves to tell Nello about the secret rendezvous. They leave and Pia enters in a very melancholy mood. She had purchased her brother Rodrigo's freedom with gold, and, not having heard from him, fears that she might have been betrayed. Lamberto then brings her a letter confirming Rodrigo's imminent release and Pia expresses her joy.

Scene 2 The interior of Nello's pavillion. Nello plans to kill Rodrigo for having violated the peace that he had sworn at his sister's wedding (Nello is a Ghibelline and Rodrigo a Guelph). Ghino enters and tells him that Pia has an assignation with an unknown man. Nello swears vengeance while Ghino expresses his guilt feelings for having betrayed Pia.

Scene 3 A horrible dungeon. Rodrigo is freed by the jailer and promises to fight the Ghibellines once more.

Scene 4 Pia's apartments. Ubaldo tells the soldiers that they are to let the unknown man gain entry so that he can betray himself with Pia. Lamberto has seen the soldiers hiding and warns her of the impending ambush just before Rodrigo arrives. However, he knows of a secret passage through which Rodrigo escapes after he and Pia embrace briefly. Nello, Ghino and the others arrive too late - Rodrigo is gone and Ubaldo and the soldiers are unable to catch him. Nello orders Pia dragged off to prison at the castle of the Maremme while Ghino expresses his remorse.

I N T E R V A L

A warning gong will be sounded for five minutes before the end of the interval.

Part II The encampment of the Florentine Guelph army near the gates of Siena.

Scene 1 Lamberto tells Rodrigo of Pia's imprisonment, Rodrigo resolves to defeat Nello and the Ghibelline army and go to the aid of his sister.

Scene 2 A hall of arms at the castle of the Maremme. Ghino comes to see Pia to offer her freedom in return for her love. She refuses reminding him that she is faithful to her husband and tells him that the supposed seducer was her brother. She would rather die than be an adulteress. However, she manages to convince Ghino that he should save her by telling the truth to Nello. After he leaves and Pia returns to her cell, Ubaldo reads a letter from Nello ordering him to kill her if he, Nello should die in battle and thus be unable to revoke the order at dawn.

Scene 3 The hall of a hermitage. During a fierce storm, a chorus of hermits prays to Heaven. Nello arrives, having been defeated and put to flight by the Guelphs. He is heart-broken and tells the hermits that he still loves his wife. The sound of swords is heard, Ghino drags himself in, mortally wounded. He manages to tell Nello that Pia is innocent and dies. Nello rushes off to her prison to try to get there before dawn.

Scene 4 Pia's prison. As Pia sleeps, Ubaldo pours some poison into a cup of water. She wakes up and, being feverish and thirsty, drinks the cup. She begs Nello to return, which he does. They embrace, but Pia starts to become ill and Nello realizes that he was too late. Rodrigo arrives followed by Guelphs and the dying Pia begs her husband and brother to stop their hatred.

"Your attention is drawn to the display of Donizetti Society publications at the Q.E.H. bookstall"

LOIS McDONALL was born in Canada and after graduating from Toronto University spent a year with the Flensburg Opera (Germany) appearing in Tosca, Lohengrin and Seraglio. She joined Sadlers Wells Opera (now ENO) in 1973 and has sung a wide variety of roles including Fioridiligi, Manon, Freia, Marschallin, Elvira and The Merry Widow. Last November Miss McDonall sang Euryanthe for the ENO and has just sang her first Gilda (Rigoletto). Immediately after this engagement she starts rehearsals for the new production of Verdi's I Due Foscari. She first sang with Pro Opera in 1973 in Mayr's L'Amor Coniugale and in 1975 sang in the first modern performance of Donizetti's Les Martyrs.

ANTHONY RODEN commenced study at the Adelaide Conservatory (South Australia) with Arnold Matters and sang in many concerts for the Australian Radio including the Messiah, Creation and the Bach Passions. He came to England in 1969 and recommenced his studies at The London Opera Centre. After a year with Opera for All he joined Glyndebourne singing Belmonte, Tamino, and Lenski a role that was to win him the coveted John Christie Award. A year at Krefeld followed where he sang Ottavio, Jose, Almaviva and in Lortzing's Wildschütz. He has sung with The Welsh National Opera and the English National Opera where his roles included Alfredo (Traviata), Ferrando, Camille (The Widow), Tamino and Ottavio, repeating these last two in Prague, November 1976. Shortly after he sang in Pro Opera's Maria di Rohan and also made his London recital debut at the Wigmore Hall. He returns to Australia this summer for a series of concerts for Australian Radio.

DELLA JONES was born in Neath (Wales) where her early studies included piano and clarinet as well as singing. In 1962 she was awarded a scholarship to The Royal College of Music and has since won the Tagore Medal, The Ferrier Memorial Scholarship and a Countess of Munster Award. After further study in Switzerland where she sang in Boris, Albert Herring, Lulu and Onegin she returned to England and toured with WNO singing Rosina and Cherubino. In 1977 she sang Urbain in Les Huguenots in Paris for ORTF and was invited back to sing Cenerentola and in Il Signor Bruschino. She has appeared with the Handel Opera Society, The English Music Theatre in Cenerentola and is now a member of the ENO singing such diverse roles as Rosina, Suzuki, Vallicienne, Italian Girl, Flute and From The House of the Dead. She will make her Scottish Opera debut as Hansel next June, will sing at this year's Camden Festival in Almeda's La Spinalba and takes part in the G & S season at the Tower of London in July. Next November Miss Jones will sing in Rossini's Theiving Magpie for the ENO and has recently recorded the part of Louis V in Donizetti's Ugo Conte di Parigi for Opera Rara.

JONATHAN SUMMERS left Australia in 1974 for further study in England having won all of the major singing competitions in his own country. He made his British debut in Kent Opera's Rigoletto: his immediate success and the critical attention he received led immediately to other offers and in 1976 sang in Verdi's Macbeth at London University, Schaunard for Northern Ireland Opera and Falstaff for Glyndebourne Touring. Since September 1976 he has been a member of The Royal Opera making his debut as Killion in Der Freischütz and has since sung the Herald (Lohengrin), Sonora (Fanciulla), Yamadori (Butterfly). He has sung Tonio (Pagliacci) for the ENO Orestes in Iphigenia for Kent Opera (a role he repeats this Spring). Mr. Summers first sang with Pro Opera in December 1976 as Chevreuse in Donizetti's Maria di Rohan.

JOHN TOMLINSON graduated in Civil Engineering from Manchester University before winning a scholarship to study at the Royal Manchester College of Music in 1967. He joined Glyndebourne in 1970 and was soon taking leading roles including Banquo (Macbeth), Colline (Bohème) and Sylvano (La Calisto). He first sang with ENO in 1974 as the Monk in Carlos and has since sung all the leading bass roles with the company including Talbot (Mary Stuart), Leporello, Pogner, Sparafucile, Sarastro and Fasolt. He has appeared often with Kent Opera. The New Opera Co., and has a large concert repertoire appearing with the major choral societies in this country. Mr. Tomlinson first sang with Pro Opera in the first modern performance of Mayr's L'Amor Coniugale in 1973 and in Donizetti's Les Martyrs in 1975. Forthcoming engagements include I Due Foscari at the ENO. The English Bach Festival (U.K. and France) and he returns to Pro Opera in July for the Verdi Requiem at the Royal Albert Hall.

ARMISTEAD WILKINSON was born in Accrington (Lancs) and came to London to study at the Guildhall Sch. of Music with Ellis Keeler and Laura Sarti having won a Heilbut Scholarship. After further study in Italy with Ettore Campogalianni he returned to England and sang in Albert Herring whilst still an amateur gradually building up an impressive list of 'tenore di grazia' roles from Mozart to Rossini. Since turning professional he has sung with Kent Opera, Glyndebourne (Festival and Touring) joining them on their visit to France in 1976. This year he again returns to Glyndebourne and will also sing Monostatos (Magic Flute) on their forthcoming tour.

MERRIL JENKINS comes from Hafodyrynys (South Wales) and trained at The Trinity College of Music, London. She was awarded an Austrian State Scholarship to study in Vienna and subsequently became a member of the International Centre Lyrique, Geneva. Since returning to England in 1973 when she sang in The Fairy Queen at the QEH she has given many concert and lieder performances in this country, has sung with the ENO, BBC-TV, and has returned to Vienna, Geneva and Aix to sing operatic roles. She has recently appeared in Carmen at the ENO and this summer will sing Elvira, Musetta and Frasquita (Carmen) with The South American Opera in Columbia.