



Petrella in Palermo his Bicentenary

Born in Palermo but with a career far from his native city, dying in Genoa, the composer's mortal coil was returned home to be buried in the magnificent Basilica of San Domenica - the Pantheon of distinguished Sicilians. In order to make sure that his 200th Birthday should not pass unobserved the Donizetti Society, thanks to the initiative of our *consorella donizettiana* Gloria Martellucci and Fulvio Stefano Lo Presti, sustained by the illustrious Prof. Leoluca Orlando, *Sindaco di Palermo* and by Dott. Francesco Giambrone *Assessore alla Cultura*, it has been possible to celebrate his life with an appropriate *mini-convegno* and commemoration.



Portait of Errico Petrella 1813-1877
Italian Opera Composer
(Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, Bologna, Italy)

Organizzazione e rapporti istituzionali
Gloria Martellucci ***(Donizetti Society)***

Il 10 Dicembre 2013 data del
BICENTENARIO
della nascita di Errico Petrella (Palermo 1813 - Genova 1877)
a cura della
Donizetti Society di Londra
si terrà una Cerimonia Commemorativa e una Tavola Rotonda
nella Basilica di San Domenico di Palermo,
dove si conservano le spoglie del musicista.
Alle ore 17,00 sarà deposta una corona di alloro nella terza Cappella
della navata sinistra del Pantheon palermitano.
Seguirà nella Sagrestia della Basilica la Tavola Rotonda cui parteciperanno:

Prof. Leoluca Orlando *Sindaco di Palermo* che aprirà i lavori
Dott. Salvatore Savoia *Segretario Generale Storia Patria*
Dott. Fulvio Stefano Lo Presti *Donizetti Society*
M° Marco Betta *Conservatorio Vincenzo Bellini di Palermo*
Prof. Sebastian Werr *Università di Bayreuth*
In conclusione il soprano Anna Rita Pinsino,
parlerà della vocalità petrelliana ed eseguirà alcuni brani del compositore
accompagnata dal M° Salvatore Scinaldi.

La Sua presenza è particolarmente gradita

In the late afternoon of 10 December a wreath was deposited at the foot of his tomb on behalf of the Society, preceded by a brief prayer and blessing from the Prior of the Dominicans Fr. Sergio Catalano, followed by a *tavola rotunda* in the nearby Sacristy of San Domenica which some fifty people attended.

Photographs opposite
(above) View of the Sacristy audience with Dssa. Gloria Martellucci and Dott. Francesco Giambrone seated first row left
(below) left to right Dott. Fulvio Stefano Lo Presti. Sindaco Prof. Leoluca Orlando, and Prof Marco Betta of the Conservatorio di Palermo

Bicentenari 1813-2013:
Petrella, Verdi, Wagner in concerto a Torino

Michele Curnis

Errico Petrella morì a Genova nel 1877; Richard Wagner morì a Venezia nel 1883; Giuseppe Verdi morì a Milano nel 1901. Tutti e tre erano però nati nel 1813 (*annus mirabilis*, evidentemente). Nel 2013 le istituzioni musicali italiane si sono applicate con zelante assiduità al repertorio wagneriano e verdiano, così che a far le spese dei due nomi giganteschi siano state altre personalità importanti da ricordare, come appunto Petrella, che negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta dell'Ottocento era considerato il secondo operista italiano, dopo Verdi. Tra le poche e meritorie iniziative a ricordo della sua produzione va dunque menzionato il concerto vocale del 2 Settembre presso l'Educatorio della Provvidenza di Torino, che ai tre compositori ha voluto concedere equanime spazio. La direzione artistica dell'iniziativa si deve a Marco Leo, mentre nell'esecuzione vocale si sono avvicendati giovani e promettenti cantanti, accompagnati dal pianista Sergio Merletti. Al centro del programma, dopo Verdi e prima di Wagner, trovavano spazio quattro brani dell'operista palermitano: l'aria del protagonista di *Marco Visconti* (1854), «Tu beato alfin mi rendi», con il baritono Lorenzo Battagion; l'aria di Livia, «Abbandonata ed orfana», dalla *Jone o L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* (1858, forse l'opera più fortunata di Petrella, su libretto di Giovanni Peruzzini e ambientata nel corso dell'eruzione vesuviana del 79 d. C.), con il mezzosoprano Isabel De Paoli; la *Marcia funebre* che accompagna Glauco al supplizio, dalla stessa *Jone*, eseguita al pianoforte da Merletti; la romanza «Come si può sorridere», tratta da una delle opere brillanti e semiserie di Petrella, *Le precauzioni ossia Il carnevale di Venezia* (1851, scritta per il Teatro Novo di Napoli), con il soprano Alessandra Sassi.

Quella dal *Marco Visconti* è una tipica romanza amorosa, cantata con fervore sospiroso ed eleganza da Battagion; ed è interessante ascoltare come da un lato sia figlia della scrittura di Bellini e di Donizetti, ma dall'altro faccia parte di una temperie più drammatica e già verdiana: il parallelo più plausibile in termini armonici e stilistici potrebbe essere «Pietà, rispetto, amore» del *Macbeth* (la cui prima versione risale al 1847; l'opera petrelliana è del 1854, e quindi non si tratta di "derivazioni" sul lungo termine, ma di significative "consonanze"). Se il *Marco Visconti* discende da un romanzo del più fervente scrittore manzoniano, Tommaso Grossi (che lo aveva pubblicato nel 1834, e il cui poema in ottave *I Lombardi alla prima Crociata* aveva già ispirato il libretto di Temistocle Solera per l'omonima opera di Verdi del 1843), va ricordato che nel 1869, grazie a una riduzione librettistica di Antonio Ghislanzoni, Petrella porta sulle scene liriche *I promessi sposi*, e riceve parole di apprezzamento direttamente dal grande autore.

Jone si basa su di un testo letterariamente molto diverso, ambientato nell'antichità romana, tra amori di umili schiave e *ludi gladiatorii* pompeiani: Isabel De Paoli interpreta la romanza di Nidia «Abbandonata ed orfana», dal forte intento emozionale, con accenti e intensità appropriati; Sergio Merletti, al pianoforte solo, esegue invece con grande precisione e maestria il brano strumentale che accompagna prima i giochi nell'arena, e poi si trasforma nella marcia funebre di Glauco. Ancora oggi è dato ascoltarla nella trascrizione per banda in alcune città dell'Italia del sud, in occasione di cerimonie funebri. Dopo una lunga introduzione in stile *pompier*, da vivace e festosa la musica si trasforma in lugubre, a seguito di un'impegnativa modulazione che conduce alla tonalità minore. E appunto nel lavoro armonico sulle modulazioni si

apprezza ancora nella scrittura di Petrella la lezione dell'ultimo Donizetti (segnale che basterebbe per porre in discussione il pregiudizio sulla scarsa perizia tecnica del compositore siciliano). Alessandra Sassi completa l'antologia petrelliana con *Il carnevale di Venezia* e l'aria di Albina, fanciulla che si dispera con elegiaca ambiguità: parole di disperazione sono cantate con *allure* brillante (in un'atmosfera quasi da gounodiano *air de bijoux*), e la cabaletta gioca sull'effetto mimetico del riso per mezzo di gorgheggi che il soprano rende in modo perfettamente convincente ed espressivo.

Occorre essere grati agli organizzatori del concerto e agli artisti, che si sono impegnati nella riscoperta di un repertorio ingiustamente dimenticato e affascinante: le loro esecuzioni dimostrano che la musica di Petrella meriterebbe più d'una ripresa sui palcoscenici dei teatri italiani. Ma le quattro giovani voci si sono egregiamente disimpegnate anche nel repertorio verdiano e wagneriano che il programma prevedeva: il baritono Battagion ha fraseggiato molto bene, forte del felice timbro vocale, nell'aria dai *Masnadieri* «La sua lampada vitale»; si è poi cimentato con grande impegno in «Die Frist ist um» dal *Fliegende Holländer* (Verdi gli è comunque più congeniale rispetto a Wagner). Il mezzosoprano De Paoli ha cantato con vigore «Stride la vampa» dal *Trovatore*, nonché *Der Engel* (dai meravigliosi *Wesendonck Lieder*), con grande intensità e correttezza. Il tenore Ludo Farago si è esibito in «Ah sì, ben mio» di nuovo dal *Trovatore* (senza la cabaletta) e in «Dio mi potevi scagliar tutti i mali» da *Otello*, rimarcando così (forse con qualche portamento di troppo e con qualche piccola sprezzatura nell'intonazione) la trasformazione strutturale della romanza tenorile nell'ultimo Verdi. Il soprano Sassi ha proposto «Caro nome» dal *Rigoletto* e «Sul fil d'un soffio etesio» dal *Falstaff*, compensando la sobrietà degli armonici vocali sia con un'ottima tecnica negli acuti e nella coloratura sia con un fraseggio costantemente elegante. Il pianista Merletti ha completato l'omaggio wagneriano con la trascrizione lisztiana di «O du mein holder Abendstern» dal *Tannhäuser*, rivelando piena padronanza del difficile spartito. A conclusione della serata una sorpresa verdiana di grande emozione: per il duetto da *Otello*, «Già nella notte densa», è rientrato in scena il tenore Farago accompagnando il soprano e maestra di canto Silvana Moyso, artista che nel 2013 festeggia i quarant'anni di carriera lirica. Allieva di Elvira De Hidalgo (e ora maestra della Sassi) interpreta Desdemona con straordinaria musicalità e con pienezza di voce, ma anche con signorile solidarietà per il giovane tenore impegnato nella parte di Otello. Dopo un tributo di apprezzamento a tutti gli artisti, e ritmato dagli applausi del pubblico, il brindisi della *Traviata* conclude festosamente il concerto verdi-wagner-petrelliano con la partecipazione di tutti i cantanti.



Errico Petrella *Caterina Howard* Atto II° Gran Scena e duettino

ERRICO PETRELLA ED I PEDANTI

Quella buona e brava gente che sono i cacciatori di sconcordanze ed i sopraintendenti alla collocazione dei punti e delle virgole, vogliamo dire i professori amplissimi di grammatica e di ortografia musicale, hanno sempre accusato il Petrella di toglier loro la pace e la tranquillità de'sonni; di fare, cioè, un po' troppo a suo modo, di non esser sempre obbedientissimo alle regole o, segnatamente, a quelle che si riferiscono al ritmo.

Il cielo ci guardi ora dal mettere menomamente in dubbio l'autorità del prefati amplissimi professori. Ma ci si permetta però di ricordare che le regole della musica, infin del conto, sono ben lontane dall'avere quella certezza matematica che alcuni credono e vorrebbero fa credere; - che molte regole, anche nel concetto de'baccalari della scienza e perfino in quello de'pedanti più cocciuti, acconsentono a un cosi gran numero di eccezioni, da perdere ogni valore; - che parecchie altre, savie ed opportune un tempo, oggi si chiariscono arbitrarie e nulle.

Prima di credere ai biasimi che in nome delle regole si danno a questa o a quella opera, a questo o a quel compositore, sarà sempre consiglio di buona giustizia il vedere in che, in quanto e fin dove quelle regole abbiano la sanzione della ragione e della buona pratica.

La musica di Petrella venne frequentemente, e quasi diremmo constatemente accusata di mancare alle leggi del ritmo.

Ammettiamo, concediamo, sentiamo anzi che le frasi zoppe non si possono e non si debbono tollerare in alcun modo. Ma a questo proposito dobbiamo ricordare: che non è vero per nulla che i periodi sieno zoppi e che sieno zoppe le frasi, quando non costano di quattro o di otto battute, ecc.

Il contare le battute per avere giudizio della giustezza del ritmo, è un criterio che non può applicarsi sempre, che può portare a grossolani errori e che (circostanza degna di considerazione e di attenzione) è nemico capitale dell'unica regola che possa aversi in questa materia: quella che insegna a non consultare e a non avere altro giudice che l'orecchio.

Che se l'orecchio è viziato, aspettatevi di trovare zoppe ache le frasi con le battute nel canonico numero pari: perchè il ritmo ha modi di essere, ha elissi, ha espansioni, ha sincopi, le cui leggi sono misteriose, non meno di quanto sono misteriosi i suoi principi attivi e i suoi effetti irresistibili e prepontenti.

A provare la verità di quanto diciamo, potremmo addurre infiniti esempi tolti dalle opere de'compositori più lodati; ma uno basterà per tutti. Per quanto è a nostra notizia nessuno mai ebbe a notare come zoppa una frase dell'ultima aria della Lucia di Lammermoor. sui versi: Rispetta almen le ceneri - Di chi moria per te; - eppure quella frase è di sette battute. E s'avverta bene che il Donizetti (musicista d'orecchio infallibile) la volle cosi per proposito determinato; perchè stesa a primo tratto in otti battute, la ristrinse dopo in sole sette, compenetrando due battute in una. (La partitura originale della Lucia posseduta dal signor Cottreau di Napoli, non lascia su ciò alcun dubbio).

Non si dimentichi, infine, che le regole di un'arte vogliono esser desunte dalla pratica, che le opere fanno le regole, e che le regole non fanno e non faranno mai le opere. E si pensi che quelle opere, le quali non hanno che il pregio dell'obbedienza alle regole, - le opere che si direbbero legali e che si potrebbero scrivere in carta bollata, - le opere, come usava dire Grétry, che puzzano di musica, - giunte al secondo atto, fanno immancabilmente fuggire dal teatro tutti quelli che non si sono addormentati al primo.

E ben doloroso, in questi ultimi anni, deve essere riuscito al povero Petrella, il modo di procedere di non pochi critici; i quali, senza riserve e senza riguardi usarono due pesi e due misure. Gli facevan colpa e gravissima di ciò che poi lodavano e applaudivano e incensavano negli altri. Lo chiamavano al banco della scuola, reo di licenze e di disattenzioni, e poi proclamavano robusti ingegni e rigeneratori dell'arte, e genii, i fanciulli arrolati sotto la bandiera del Wagner (intendendo il Wagner a modo loro o, piuttosto, non intendendolo affatto): i quali fanciulli, in ordine a licenze, a disattenzioni e anco a solenni sgrammaticature, ne ammucchiano tante nelle loro opere che ci si direbbero piovute dentro.

G.A.Biaggi

GAZZETTA MUSICALE DI MILANO
22 aprile 1877, p131

This scathing defence of Errico Petrella after a series of unprincipled attacks was printed by Girolamo Alessandro Biaggi (1819-1897) shortly after the composer's death, he was a passionate critic who founded and directed *L'Italia musicale* in Milan, at once a notable patriot and one of the most exacting advocates of music theory in his day with an academic post at the *R. Istituto musicale di Firenze.* He put his faith in a musical education based on the most precise technical knowledge. Biaggi's contributions to the journal *Nazione* were an important feature of Italian musical life between1866-1895. AW

THE VAMPIRE RISES IN NEW ORLEANS

Ah, John Polidori, what hast thou wrought? The summer of 1816 was famously cold and rainy, as if a new ice age had descended on Europe. George Gordon, Lord Byron, had rented a villa on the shores of Lake Geneva, and invited several friends to join him, including Percy Shelley and his future wife Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and Mary's stepsister Claire Clairmont There was also the young John Polidori, personal physician to Lord Byron.

Polidori was the son of an Italian patriot in exile and an English governess, who had taken his degree inmedicine at the University of Edinburgh at age 19 and soon after had hired on as Byron's personal doctor. His name would be linked to other famous English poets and artists, albeit after his death, because his sister Frances would marry Italian scholar Gabriele Rossetti, and their children would include Dante Gabriel Rossetti, eminent Pre-Raphaelite painter, poet and translator, and Christina Rossetti, a major Victorian poet in her own right, making Polidori their uncle.

On a cold, rainy night in June of that 'year without summer', the small group gathered at the Villa Diodati, and to entertain themselves they read ghost stories to each other from a book called Tales of the Dead. At the end of the evening, Lord Byron suggested that each of them write their own ghost story. Byron's story remained fragmentary and Shelley's did not get very far, but Mary Godwin began work on what would eventually become that archetypal monster tale, Frankenstein; and John Polidori wrote a story called The Vampyre, which is probably the first published vampire tale in English. In 1819 the story appeared without Polidori's permission in an English magazine, and the magazine's editor claimed it was by Byron. After all, Byron was a well known author, but who had heard of Polidori? Byron immediately made it known that the story was Polidori's, but the falsehood persisted, and even today New Orleans Opera's website claims that the opera is based on a story by Lord Byron. Perhaps Byron's fragment had inspired Polidori, but the story belonged to the young doctor, not the famous poet and larger than life figure.

The Vampyre was immediately popular and has inspired countless books, films and TV series. Polidori gets the credit for the basic features of the classic vampire tale--a tormented soul who is an aristocrat (Lord Ruthven in The Vampyre) and not a crude monster. Likewise, other common elements are the need for the blood of pretty virgins to sustain a vampire's life and a wooden stake through the heart as the only way to kill one. Vampire stories were popular throughout the nineteenth century and took on new life with Bram Stoker's Dracula in 1897. And it was not long into the twentieth century before

the movies discovered vampires (the German classic Nosferatu in 1922) and to date there are literally hundreds of films and TV shows which have made money from the long-toothed neck-biters. They have never been more popular than in our own day when the wildly best-selling books of Anne Rice (The Vampire Chronicles), movies like the Twilight Series, or popular television shows like First Blood have legions of fans.

Polidori's novella takes place in London and moves to Rome, as Aubrey travels with the mysterious Lord Ruthven, whom he has met in London society. Aubrey then moves on to Greece, where he meets the beautiful Ianthe, who tells him the legend of the vampire; soon Ruthven arrives and Ianthe is found dead, the victim of a vampire. Aubrey does not yet make the connection between Ruthven and the vampire, and he sets out to travel with Ruthven again. They are attacked by bandits, and Ruthven is mortally wounded, but before dying, he makes Aubrey swear an oath to never speak of his death for a year and a day. Back in London, Aubrey is amazed to see Ruthven alive and well, and when the latter courts Aubrey's sister, he is powerless to stop him, suffering a breakdown. By this time, Aubrey has figured out that Ruthven is a vampire, and he writes a letter to his sister, warning her, but the letter does not arrive in time, and the sister is found dead on her wedding night. Ruthven has vanished.

The opera's libretto is based on a German play by Heinrich Ritter (1821) which makes several changes to Polidori's story. We now have the need of Ruthven to seduce and kill three virgin brides within a 24 hour period if he is to live another year. It is probably a fatal change for the believability of the story since each girl comes with a father and two of them have grooms-to be, and Aubrey becomes the lover of Malwina, and not her brother. There are too many characters, so that we are not able to really believe in any of them, since the action is fragmented and there is not sufficient time to become involved with any one of them. Ruthven is the only consistent player. The ending is changed too, no doubt to fit acceptable stage behavior for a bourgeois audience: Malwina and Aubrey (now her lover) escape Ruthven, and he, Don Giovanni-like, sinks to hell in the end. Everyone praises God--a far cry from Polidori's much more potent and shocking ending.

It is not difficult to understand why New Orleans Opera decided to stage Marschner's rarely done work, because the Big Easy has an important stake (pardon the expression) in the vampire craze these days, and not only because Anne Rice made New Orleans her home and central to her vampire stories. With its monumental cemeteries, voodoo, gas-lit French Quarter and general atmosphere of decadence, New Orleans seems the perfect setting for the blood-sucking set. Still, it was a bold decision for New Orleans Opera to open their 2013-14 season with Der Vampyr. Marschner is not exactly a household name among casual opera goers and Der Vampyr is a title more likely to be

encountered in a text on the Romantic period in Germany than in the programs of opera houses. New Orleans, however, has a very distinguished history in opera in North America; it was one of the first cities in the New World to perform operas (from 1796), and in the early years of the nineteenth century, when New Orleans had both a French Opera and an Italian company, that city hosted the American premieres of many works by Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti, not to mention performing almost every important work from the French repertory. In our day, the local company has had a decidedly less adventurous sense of programming until recently when Robert Lyall became General and Artistic Director. In 2013-14 New Orleans has an adventurous repertory, including Britten's Noye's Fludde, Massenet's Cendrillon, Der Vampyr, and only one sure-to-fill-the-house standard, La boheme.

Vampires in opera have not been as ubiquitous as ghosts (Lucia, Robert le Diable, Faust), devils (you name the opera), or witches (Macbeth, Ballo), but Polidori-based works inspired both Marschner and Lindpainter about the same time. Marschner's 1828 opera (only 9 years after the Polidori story was first published in English) was the ninth of 18 operas that the composer would produce over the next 30+ years. Only one other of his works (Hans Heiling, another supernatural story) is still performed occasionally, surely not because his music lacks quality, but because Wagner would soon so overwhelm other German opera composers, that names like Marschner, Lortzing and even Weber seem marginal in the performed repertory today.In fact Marschner's music is very good, and especially in the extensive choral writing. Marschner's brother-in-law, Wilhelm August Wohlbruck, wrote the libretto, which opens with the Witches' Sabbath where Ruthven is given his task, and goes on to include the seduction and murder-by-bite of two of those three women, Janthe and Emmy, and the attempt to wed and slay a third young virgin, Malwina, who is saved by her true love, Edgar Aubrey. The opera follows a familiar pattern (Robert the Devil, Faust, Gounod's La nonne sanglante, Der Freischutz, The Flying Dutchman) wherein a pure maiden (Malwina), aided by heaven, triumphs over infernal forces, here represented by the vampire. One of Marschner's obvious operatic sources is Don Giovanni, because as with the fate of the Spanish seducer, hell opens in the end and swallows up Ruthven, who is stilled not by a wooden spike through the heart, but a divine bolt of lightening. Earlier, Marschner had
channelled Mozart in the seduction duet between Ruthven and Emmy, which is suspiciously like the Zerlina-Giovanni duet, with interjections from George, the Masetto character in Der Vampyr. However, Emmy suffers a fate far worse than that of Zerlina. Marschner's other musical sources are Beethoven, with whom he hoped (vainly) to study, and of course Carl Maria von Weber, whose

Der Freischutz (1821), the archetypal German Romantic opera, provides the Wolf's Glen scene as a model for Marschner's Witches' Sabbath, as well as numerous melodic and orchestral models, not least the use of horns. On the other hand, Marschner's opera is the model for some of Wagner's early works, including the supernatural Die Feen, and especially The Flying Dutchman, where Senta's "Legend of the Dutchman" is clearly modeled on Emmy's "Legend of the Vampire" in Act II of Marschner's work. Tone always seems to be a problem in these Gothic works. How seriously do you take a work about vampires (or ghosts or even devils as in Faust)? Reportedly, this was a problem with Covent Garden's recent staging of Robert le diable, and even when I saw that work in Paris in 1985, the Opera could not avoid a sometimes tongue-in-cheek approach, especially in the famous ballet of the dead, lustful nuns, which sent frissons of terror up the backbones of our ancestors, but which was staged in Paris like something by the klutzy Ballet Trocadero. Marschner and his brother-in-law decided to set their opera in misty, mysterious (in 1821) Scotland, a place for "ghoulies and ghosties, long-legged beasties and things that go bump in the night," as we know from Lucia di Lammermoor!

New Orleans Opera moved the setting to their own city, which also has its fair share of spooks, if you can believe the number of 'ghost tours' which prey on tourists' wallets. That in itself was not a bad idea, as Act I opened in one of New Orleans' monumental cemeteries on a moonlit night. The production availed itself of many projections of real places in New Orleans, including this cemetery. All of that fit the genuinely otherworldly music Marschner composed for his Witches' Sabbath scene, but then a funny thing happened to Matthew Lata's production, and the whole proceedings got campy and much too tied to a tourist's view of everything New Orleans--the Cafe du Monde with its beignets, Bourbon Street with its drunk college students, the Garden District, the French Quarter with its wrought iron balconies, the St. Louis Cathedral, the Superbowl, even the Louis Armstrong Park with its Mahalia Jackson Theater where the opera performs, all of which brought knowing laughter from the locals. And then there was the St. Charles St. streetcar, a nearly full size mock-up, which trundled in at the front of the stage (twice), full of singing choristers. It might have worked for Die Fledermaus, turning partying in Vienna into partying in New Orleans, but it was a tone that was totally contrary to Marschner's music, even if a modern audience cannot take the vampiristic blood-letting completely seriously.

There is a tradition, mostly in the movies, of making fun of the monsters that freight our dreams, but that was clearly not Marschner's intention, even if he provided some comic relief in the form of one of those typically German drinking-song ensembles. The production extended that comic scene

throughout, with party-going choristers and principals wearing outfits suitable for Mardi Gras as they talked on their cell phones. The Opera even encouraged the first nighters to wear costumes and masks, and there were quite a few Draculas in the audience. This is a town that likes to dress up! The campiness was compounded by the spoken dialogue. The original opera
uses both the singspiel technique of spoken dialogue and a melodrame technique of spoken dialogue over an orchestral background. The production provided a modernized English text for the dialogue, using colloquialisms, phony stereotyped Southern accents, and even local references (to the Saints football team) and jokes (a reference to a medical investment in a failed hospital which was too local for me to get, but which brought chuckles from the audience). The dialogue was corny, the singers did not perform it well, and it provided a dissonant clash every time they broke into song in German. It was probably an idea which sounded good in proposal, but did not work on stage because it clashed with the serious nature of the music, which does not admit irony.It was too bad because from a musical point of view, the production was quite sound and the large and young cast quite competent. Nicholas Pallesen, a baritone, who had already sung Lord Ruthven in concert in Carnegie Hall as well as singing Filippo in Beatrice di Tenda (Bellini) there, was a snarling, athletic Ruthven here. His long aria in Act II, in which he laments a vampire's lot, was a highlight. Edgar Aubrey is a tenor role, sung here by a sweet voiced Corey Bix, who was made up to look like a college freshman in a Tulane tee shirt, which seriously undercut the importance of his role. The three virginal bitees were Irene Roberts (a sexy Janthe), Jennifer Tiller (Emmy Blunt), and Marjorie Owens as the virtuous Malwina Davenaut. Perhaps Ms. Owens possessed the best voice of the evening, rising easily to the grand Freischutz-like melody in the finale; she is a regular member of the ensemble in Dresden, and sings Italian and German roles at the Semperoper there, including Malwina's opera-child, Senta. Humphrey Davenaut, Malwina's father who insists that she marry Ruthven Marsden, was sung by Stephen West, who has had an extensive career in both Europe and America, including singing both Boito's and Gounod's Mephisto roles. The many minor roles were well handled too. Robert Lyall conducted the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and the large New Orleans Opera Chorus. The richness of the orchestral scoring, the beauty of the choral writing, and some of the arias made for a joyous evening full of musical discovery. The Company is certainly to be commended for daring to schedule such an unusual work. If only they had not felt the need to turn the drama, as flawed as it may be, into a promotional brochure for the local office of tourism.

Charles Jernigan

Recordings

Something to look forward to...

In 2013 one of my few sources of vicarious pleasure (almost *schadenfreude*) has been the cries of pain from the larger music recording companies. They seem surprised that, having saturated the market with their back-catalogues at least twice (not counting their efforts to get us to buy the same things in slightly improved sound quality) they have been thrown back on their ability to capture the best of the newer, younger performing talent. Surprised, that is, to find that others with greater foresight have occupied that ground already.
All this is preamble to some snippets of news about recordings of unusual repertoire that we can expect to find becoming available in 2014.
A big source of recordings continues to be the Naxos label. Early in the New Year Felicien David's *Lalla Rook*, performed by Opera Lafayette of the US is likely to appear. It is a deliciously tuneful work that makes few demands on the listener Maybe it will come in March 2014, but it is best to be patient; sometimes the delay in preparation seems inordinately long, and other times surprisingly short, so best to keep our eyes open and grab it when it comes
Less predictable is the appearance of CDs from Franz Hauk and his Simon Mayr Chorus and Ensemble Hopefully some of his recent performances will appear, particularly Mayr's *Il Sogno di Partenope*.
On the subject of Mayr there is *Ginevra di Scozia*: not the pasticcio version done in Trieste and recorded by Opera Rara, but the original complete with cod-Scotch prelude and full of Mozartian ensembles: a real feast of gorgeous music. It will appear on the OEHMS label
Probably the most important source of recordings from unusual venues is proving to be the Palazzo Bru Zane, a French government funded establishment in Venice specialising in the 'French Romantic' music The scope of repertoire is huge, and initiatives in many countries are supported. a concert in Bulgaria and even a recording UK (the recent Hyperion CD of Gounod's Pedal-Piano Concerto). Unfortunately the discology is confusing and the links provided on the website (http://www.bru-zane.com) are idiosyncratic to say the least. The operatic repertoire of the Classical period (post Gluck) appears on Glossa (a Spanish label). But the Palazzo seems also to have its own label, *Opéra Français* and has extended its field of interest to include late Massenet (*Le Mage* is the most recent issued). In 2014 Catel's *Les Bayadères* is likely to appear (from a Bulgarian recording) and, later in the year, Salieri's *Les Danaïdes* (recently performed in concert by *Les Talens Lyriques* in Vienna, Versailles and Metz; a fascinating swathe of venues). Future issues also seem to be planned for rare Saint-Saens (*Les Barbares*) and more David (*Herculaneum*).
My last piece of news is from another cheap label, Brilliant Classics, and is of a recital of excerpts from Meyerbeer's Paris operas performed by Pierre-Yves Pruvot, baryton, Hjördis Thebault, soprano. It includes items from all 6 operas.
So, some things to look forward to indeed I await impatiently...

Douglas Bennett

PIETRO GENERALI e
L'ADELAIDE DI BORGOGNA

Franco Piva

L'occasione per avvicinare e conoscere l'*Adelaide di Borgogna* di Pietro Generali mi è stata data dalla Fondazione Cultura del Comune di Rovigo il Teatro di quella città è stato inaugurato nel 1819 appunto da quest'Opera. Generali ha composto l'*Adelaide* mentre era direttore musicale del Teatro di 'Santa Cruz' a Barcellona: ha ricevuto questo incarico dal Comune di Rovigo dopo la rinuncia, per motivi economici, da parte di Rossini. Per Generali questa occasione era doppiamente interessante e importante: innanzitutto perché si trattava dell'apertura di un nuovo teatro e poi perché bisognava dimostrare che il Comune non aveva riposto male la sua fiducia e che il risultato non sarebbe stato inferiore a quello che poteva presentare Rossini. In effetti l'Opera è molto impegnata e impegnativa da tutti i punti di vista: si può dire che in questo lavoro Generali abbia utilizzato al meglio tutta la sua precedente esperienza, tutte le suggestioni assorbite dai suoi contemporanei e tutta la sapienza tecnica e drammaturgica assimilata

La sua precedente esperienza è molto intensa: prima del 1819, infatti, aveva composto e rappresentato ben 23 Opere buffe (la prima seria è del 1812: *Attila*) e aveva quindi acquisito tutto il necessario, in senso musicale e in senso drammaturgico, per raggiungere la piena maturità stilistica e la completa conoscenza di tutte le esigenze connesse con i meccanismi della rappresentazione Le suggestioni assorbite dai suoi contemporanei sono molte Lasciamo per il momento da parte il suo problematico rapporto con Rossini ed escludiamo (ma sarebbe tutto da verificare) eventuali rapporti diretti o indiretti con Cherubini, Spontini e Mayr; teniamo presente il fatto che all'epoca dell'*Adelaide* Beethoven aveva già scritto, fra l'altro, otto Sinfonie e che Schubert aveva già composto sei Sinfonie, numerosi Lieder e molta musica strumentale. non si può non ritenere che il Generali conoscesse almeno una parte di questa fondamentale produzione. L'*Adelaide*, però, è anche ricca di significative anticipazioni; di Donizetti soprattutto All'epoca, Donizetti aveva rappresentato soltanto quattro lavori: *Enrico di Borgogna*, Opera seria in 2 Atti (Venezia, 1818); *Una follia*, Farsa in 1 Atto (Venezia, 1818); *Piccioli virtuosi ambulanti*, Opera buffa in 1 Atto (Bergamo, 1819; *Pietro il Grande, Czar delle Russie o Il Falegname di Livonia*, Melodramma burlesco (Venezia, 1819). E' da escludere che Generali abbia conosciuto questi lavori, dato che in quegli anni, già dal 1817 e fino al 1821, si trovava stabilmente a Barcellona. Quello, quindi, che si può individuare nella partitura dell'*Adelaide* come "donizettiano" (per esempio l'Aria di Berengario *Sposa del figlio* nell'*Introduzione* all'Atto I e l'episodio conclusivo del Duetto *Adalberto/Ottone* nel penultimo numero dell'Atto II) non può che essere il risultato di una autonoma ricerca, anche se questi atteggiamenti stilistici del Generali possono essere considerati, almeno in parte, come il frutto di suggestioni provenienti dalle tendenze del linguaggio musicale allora corrente.

Il rapporto con Rossini è molto complesso: intanto per la forte rivalità, ovviamente chiusa a totale favore del Pesarese, e poi per quelle che, sentite a posteriori, sembrano chiare influenze. Ma i fatti pare che dicano cose diverse. La prima Opera rappresentata di Rossini, *La cambiale di matrimonio*, è del 1810· ebbene, di Generali, dal 1800 (*Gli amanti ridicoli*) al 1810 compreso, vengono

rappresentate ben 23 Opere buffe in diverse importanti città italiane (Roma, Bologna, Parma, Venezia, Milano, Napoli, Firenze) e non si può non pensare che Rossini, in giro per l'Italia al seguito dei genitori, abbia ascoltato almeno qualcuna di quelle ventitrè produzioni e non si può, quindi, non pensare che questi contatti, del tutto verosimili, abbiano creato in lui qualche suggestione e determinato qualche significativo stimolo. In base a questa considerazione risulterebbe vero il contrario di quello che a posteriori si sarebbe portati a dedurre: gli aspetti rossiniani nella partitura dell'*Adelaide* di Pietro Generali sono in realtà delle anticipazioni o comunque dei risultati conseguiti autonomamente; in questo senso può avere qualche fondamento l'attribuzione a Generali della "invenzione" del crescendo, com'è scritto sulla lapide del suo monumento funebre. Di Rossini, il 27 dicembre del 1817, al Teatro Argentina di Roma, veniva rappresentata l'Opera seria in 2 Atti, su libretto di G. Schmidt, *Adelaide di Borgogna ossia Ottone re d'Italia*: sicuramente il Generali, essendo già a Barcellona, non ha assistito a questa rappresentazione; d'altra parte, se avesse potuto farlo, non avrebbe "imparato" molto, dato che questo lavoro rossiniano è molto debole, pochissimo originale e generalmente superficiale e molto poco impegnato In quanto ai virtuosismi, presenti soprattutto nelle Arie di *Adelaide* e di *Adalberto*, si tratta di 'residui' dell'Opera seria settecentesca e non di stilemi di origine rossiniana La conclusione che, a seguito delle precedenti considerazioni, penso si possa trarre è che Generali in quest'Opera molte cose le ha direttamente inventate; egli è, cioè, uno di quei compositori che, più per ignoranza che per motivazioni oggettive, vengono sommariamente e sbrigativamente definiti "minori" E' questa una definizione fatta a posteriori, visti cioè i clamorosi risultati dei "maggiori", ma in molti casi senza i cosiddetti "minori" non ci sarebbero stati i clamorosi risultati dei "maggiori", perché gli autori poco celebrati a causa delle affermazioni dei Grandi spesso sono quelli che hanno intuizioni innovative, più o meno s'intende, e che comunque creano con le loro ricerche l'humus fertile per i successori Generali, per quello che mi risulta dalla partitura della sua *Adelaide*, è uno di questi; naturalmente è stato poi sommerso dal ciclone rossiniano e sostanzialmente dimenticato.

Scrive Gian Paolo Minardi: "*Non molto significativi i tentativi operati negli anni della maturità nell'ambito dell'opera seria* " Ebbene, con questa *Adelaide*, l'affermazione del Minardi, non so bene su quali elementi basata, può essere decisamente smentita. Si tratta, infatti, di una partitura di grande respiro e impegno musicale e drammaturgico. Vanno sottolineati soprattutto i seguenti aspetti: A) la strumentazione è tecnicamente perfetta e del tutto appropriata ed efficace; B) l'armonia, spesso tradizionale, in alcuni momenti diventa intensa e ardita; C) è singolare e molto significativa la continua presenza di corone, evidentemente destinate a riservare frequenti spazi a eventi scenici (nella incisione live della prima esecuzione moderna in forma di concerto il numero e la durata di questi "vuoti" sono stati per forza di cose ridotti, mancando in quella circostanza tutta la parte rappresentativa)· si può dire che Generali abbia avuto chiara e piena coscienza dell'importanza anche strutturale dei silenzi, sia sul piano drammaturgico che su quello prettamente musicale; D) l'articolazione del discorso musicale è estremamente varia ed elastica, con una puntuale aderenza a ciascuna transizione espressiva del testo: questo fatto dimostra che non sono state più o meno meccanicamente appiccicate formule generiche, ma che, al contrario, è stata realizzata una approfondita ricerca sui singoli aspetti narrativi ed espressivi di ogni situazione e che le immagini musicali individuate e proposte risultano del tutto conseguenti; se poi si tiene presente il fatto che il libretto non prevede grandi avvenimenti ma quasi esclusivamente tensioni emotive, è ancora più da apprezzare l'efficacia espressiva dei risultati, non così facilmente conseguibili in

questo caso, delle ricerche effettuate. E) Il Finale del primo Atto è di una complessità e di una varietà davvero eccezionali: è quasi un Atto a sé stante, anche per la presenza concentrata di tutti i personaggi e di tutte le loro situazioni interiori F) Il Coro, quasi esclusivamente maschile (le voci femminili intervengono soltanto nel Finale dell'Atto primo), ha una funzione da coprotagonista. G) Di particolare intensità e varietà sono i numerosi Recitativi Obbligati (nn. 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13). H) In alcuni momenti (per esempio: nell' Aria di *Adelaide*, al n. 3, *Se l'oggetto in lui perdei* e in quella di *Adalberto*, al n. 9, *Il cor d'un timido*) possono essere individuate situazioni prebelliniane, e in altri, come nel Coro dell'Introduzione all'Atto secondo, addirittura preverdiane

Per questa pluralità di aspetti stilistici, che non significa "pasticcio" e che non nasce da diverse appropriazioni, l'interpretazione di questa partitura risultava particolarmente delicata: si trattava, infatti, da un lato di dare il giusto rilievo ad ogni diversa situazione espressiva, dall'altro di non compromettere l'unità dell'Opera, realizzando un ponderato equilibrio fra tutte le diverse situazioni presentate Il manoscritto autografo, messo a disposizione dall'Archivio Ricordi, generalmente è abbastanza leggibile, a parte alcune parti dei 300 fogli doppi. Il problema più delicato ha riguardato le pagine conclusive del Finale del 1° Atto: Generali disponeva di fogli pentagrammati con 16 righi, e la presenza, appunto nell'episodio conclusivo di questo Finale, di tutti i solisti, di tutto il Coro e di tutta l'orchestra richiedeva molti più righi di quanti non ne avessero i fogli disponibili E, infatti, alla pagina 173 dell'autografo, l'autore scrive " *Ob. Cla. Fla Fag. Trombe e Tromboni nella partiturina in fine*". Ma questa "partiturina in fine", nonostante le accurate ricerche, non è stata trovata, ho dovuto, quindi, comporre, per tutto quell'episodio, le parti strumentali mancanti. Per il resto mi sono limitato a correggere non pochi errori evidenti e a proporre o a completare le indicazioni dinamiche.

La prima esecuzione in tempi moderni ha avuto luogo, in forma di concerto, il 17 marzo 2012 al Teatro Sociale di Rovigo; i cinque solisti principali (*Adelaide, Adalberto, Ottone, Berengario, Rambaldo*) sono stati messi a disposizione dal Teatro Lirico Sperimentale "Belli" di Spoleto (rispettivamente: Anna Carbonera, Katarzyna Otczyk, Gianluca Bocchino, Daniele Antonangeli, Roberto Cresca: tutti vincitori degli ultimi concorsi europei indetti dal Teatro stesso), mentre gli interpreti di *Clotilde* e *Corrado* (rispettivamente: Elisa Fortunati e Walter Testolin) sono stati messi a disposizione dal Teatro Sociale di Rovigo. L'Orchestra Regionale Filarmonia Veneta e il Coro Polifonico Città di Rovigo (Maestro del Coro. Vittorio Zanon) sono stati diretti da Franco Piva La registrazione live è stata realizzata dall'ing. Matteo Costa e la pubblicazione dei tre Cd è stata curata dalla 'Bongiovanni' di Bologna.

*

Mirko Bertolini così recensiva, in Teatro.org, (www.teatro.org -Anno 6, numero 12) la prima esecuzione dell'Opera.

Nel 1819 apriva a Rovigo il teatro Sociale e la municipalità rodigina commissionava a un compositore in voga all'epoca un'opera che inaugurasse questo nuovo tempio della musica in territorio ormai austriaco Il compositore era Pietro Generali, un nome che, al giorno d'oggi, dice ben poco anche ai melomani più convinti, ma che nei primi trent'anni dell'Ottocento riscosse grande successo di pubblico e che ebbe la cattiva sorte (come molti validi musicisti) di essere surclassato da nomi ancora oggi famosi .. Generali compose ben 56 opere (vivente lui vennero

rappresentate in tutti i teatri del mondo, perfino in Messico e in India'), nonché svariate cantate e numerosa musica sacra I suoi primi lavori sono considerati moderni e stravaganti nel loro vigore, presentano una ricca orchestrazione e un'inusuale ricchezza armonica

Adelaide di Borgogna è un' opera seria in due atti su libretto di Felice Romanelli La vicenda, tratta dalla storia dell'Italia alto medioevale, è ambientata nel 947, quando Adelaide di Borgogna rimane vedova del re Lotario II, per mano di Berengario d'Ivrea Quest'ultimo, nominato nuovo re d'Italia dall'assemblea dei Principi, per sigillare meglio la sua consacrazione pretende la mano di Adelaide per il figlio Adalberto Il suo costante rifiuto la portò alle vessazioni e al rapimento da parte dell'innamorato Adalberto, finchè l'imperatore Ottone I. giunto in Italia, sconfigge Adalberto, libera Adelaide e la sposa .

Il teatro Sociale l'ha proposta in forma di concerto con la prima ripresa assoluta in tempi moderni, in collaborazione con il Teatro Sperimentale di Spoleto Questo allestimento è anche un prezioso lavoro frutto di uno studio approfondito degli autografi da parte del maestro Franco Piva-), che ne ha curato una importantissima edizione critica portata a nuova stampa proprio per l'occasione dalla casa editrice Ricordi Grande il lavoro del maestro Piva che ha ridato lucentezza a questa partitura dimenticata negli archivi Ricordi Si è trattato di un evento storico, musicale e culturale unico, di grande rilievo Storicamente, Rovigo e il suo Teatro hanno riportato alla luce, con questa operazione, il primo e significativo tassello, il punto di partenza di una attività artistica che non ha mai subito cedimenti, anzi, si è sempre più articolata e amplificata in 197 anni

Da Spoleto arrivano i cantanti, selezionati tra le giovani promesse del canto, vincitori di vari premi musicali, soprattutto del concorso europeo per giovani cantanti lirici indetto dal Teatro Lirico Sperimentale di Spoleto. Nel ruolo del titolo il soprano Anna Carbonera, ha dato prova di una bella voce corposa e matura, con tecnica efficace. acuti contenuti ma espressivi Il mezzosoprano Katarzyna Otczyk, nella parte en travesti di Adalberto, è dotata di una voce molto potente, con delle sfumature quasi metalliche, ma corposa e sicura, dopo un inizio un po' incerto è entrata pienamente nel ruolo, emozionante il suo duetto con la Carbonera nel secondo atto Gianluca Bocchino ha interpretato Ottone I, pur tecnicamente corretto, però la sua voce non ha molto convinto, senza dubbio il secondo atto è stato molto impegnativo per il ruolo che il tenore sannita ha saputo portare a termine con grande partecipazione Il giovane baritono Daniele Antonangeli è stato un Berengario più che convincente, con una bella voce calda e rotonda, con acuti ponderati e bassi sicuri Walter Testolin in Corrado ha mostrato una grande tecnica e una bella voce, forse più adatta ad un repertorio barocco, ma ha affrontato il ruolo egregiamente Bravi anche Roberto Cresca in Rambaldo e Elisa Fortunati in Clotilde (purtroppo ruolo molto piccolo per una bella voce)

Il maestro Franco Piva è stato eccezionale alla guida dell'Orchestra Regionale Filarmonia Veneta, la sua lettura filologica ha permesso di riscoprire queste pagine dense di melodie cariche di espressività preromantica Il Coro Polifonico Città Di Rovigo, diretto dal maestro Vittorio Zanon, è stato molto valido nel sostenere quest'opera che vede molte parti corali dense di pathos.

Appoggiaturas in the Operas of Donizetti

Alan Jackson

At the end of my article on ornamentation in Rossini's "Una voce poco fa" (Newsletter 114) I hinted that there was another issue that deserved airing, that of the appoggiatura - when to insert, when not? I imagine that many newsletter readers will be familiar with Julian Budden's *The Operas of Verdi*. It contains an intriguing passage in the chapter on *Rigoletto* (Volume 1, p 506) on the subject of the insertion of appoggiaturas in music of the period that includes Donizetti He writes:

> the recitative itself which is marked to be sung 'without the usual appoggiaturas' – an instruction which must have caused many a singer of this century to turn back the pages feverishly wondering what appoggiatura he ought to have sung and has not In fact it is no more than a safety precaution The position with regard to the appoggiatura had been fluid since the beginning of the century Niccolò Vaccai in his *Metodo Pratico di Canto Italiano* insisted that it was obligatory, but by the time Lablache wrote his *Méthode complète de Chant* it was already regarded as optional, which meant that a composer who wanted appoggiaturas was advised to write them out rather than leave them to a singer's discretion By 1851 this had become Verdi's regular practice, as a glance at the preceding recitative will show Gilda's 'or venite' are written A flat - G flat - G flat - F Donizetti would have made the third note an F, while expecting the soprano to sing G flat.

But maybe fewer readers will have had access to what Vaccai and Lablache actually wrote Firstly, Vaccai He started writing his *Metodo pratico* in 1831 (while staying at Sudbourne Hall - the country house of the Marquis of Hertford - giving singing lessons to his daughters) It was first published in London in 1833 by the composer himself for use by his pupils (our Chairman, who has provided this information, has Vaccai's own copy) It was published commercially by T. Boosey and Co. in 1834 and has been republished continuously to date The English is rather old-fashioned but seems to me to be a fair translation. Appoggiaturas are mentioned in two sections In Lesson 8 we read:

> The Appoggiatura is the best ornament made use of in Singing, its effect depends mainly upon giving the appoggiatural note its precise value It is however not so much a fault to add to the appoggiatura as to abstract from its value

This is advice on how long an appoggiatura should be, rather than an instruction about the need to insert appoggiaturas in the first place It is followed by a musical example in which appoggiaturas are inserted at every possible place. Quite a few are from below, even when placed at the end of a descending phrase. Lesson 14, headed "On Recitative", is more relevant.

> Recitative requires a distinct and marked Syllabification, nor can it ever prove effective without a perfect accentuation. When two notes of the same name and value occur at the end of a Period [i e phrase], or even when several similar notes occur in the middle of a period, the note, on which the accent of the word falls becomes altogether an Appoggiatura to the following note To make this perfectly clear, the note, on which the accentuated syllable falls, is marked with the letter *a* over it.

There follows a long 33-bar example, and again every conceivable place where an appoggiatura might possibly be inserted, whether at the start, middle or end of a phrase, is

duly marked with promised letter *a*. There is no indication however whether the appoggiatura is to be from above or below the less-accented note.

Now Lablache. It comes from the section entitled "Article II: Recitative", and I quote from Patricia B. Brauner's translation in a facsimile of the 1842 Ricordi edition published in 1997.

> Some time ago Italian singers introduced the custom of adding frequent appoggiaturas, or rather substituting notes in some recitative passages; this adds to the elegance and reduces the monotony that results from the frequent repetition of the same notes
>
> It is impossible to set a rule for all the passages in which this substitution can occur, but in general, wherever a strong beat at the beginning or end of a phrase of recitative has two notes of the same pitch, the first of these can be replaced with the note a step higher

Lablache then gives three short examples (labelled Ex. 19, 20, 21) and continues

> At the end of the phrase, the substitution can be made with a lower note, but it must be prepared and only a semitone away

A single short example follows (Ex 22), and then·

> Such substitutions, however, should be made infrequently in French recitative, and especially not at the beginning of a phrase, where they really have no good effect except when the note that is substituted and that which follow fall on the same word

Two examples follow (Ex. 23, 24).

There are a number of observations to make Firstly, while Vaccai's commentary does suggest mandatory insertion of appoggiaturas, and Lablache's, with its 'can' rather than 'must', hints at a more optional practice, it seems significant that in all four of Lablache's examples 19 - 22 *every* possible appoggiatura is inserted, both in descending and in rising phrases (and also some in the middle of a phrase, something he doesn't mention in his text) This sounds to me as something rather more than "optional". Secondly, only a decade separates the two texts, which suggests that any change in practice dates from well into the century, rather than "from the beginning of the century". Thirdly, neither author specifies what music his advice applies to. Music written contemporaneously with them, or older music too, going back to Mozart and beyond? And fourthly, only Vaccai gives as a reason for appoggiaturas the need to let the melodic line follow the natural stress of the Italian words.

Examples 19 - 22 are in fact from Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto*, written in 1818 and revised in 1819 Lablache doesn't say whether or not his advice on appoggiaturas also holds for music written twenty and more years after, mature Donizetti for example So these two treatises don't provide the definite answers I was hoping for

My motivation for seeking out the Vaccai and Lablache texts was fanned by the recent Opera Rara recordings of *Caterina Cornaro* and *Belisario* conducted by David Parry and Mark Elder respectively Both are exceptionally good and I recommend them strongly But both, to my mind, omit appoggiaturas in places that I think demand them. In the face of such all-round excellence it may be a small point, yet I do hear many of these omissions as wrong notes

Over the years I have asked (pestered?) some very distinguished musicians about appoggiaturas – Charles Mackerras, Colin Davis, Christopher Hogwood, Andrew Porter and Mark Elder; their replies have indicated differing views – and one of the questions I have asked is whether they know of period texts or treatises that give any advice on where *not* to insert appoggiaturas in Italianate music written roughly in the century 1750 - 1850 None have come up with an example. How significant is this? Someone once asked (and if anyone can trace the article I'd love to hear from them) how many newspapers and magazines one would have to read before one discovered that The Rolling Stones played on *electric* guitars! Could it be that no-one tells us where not to insert appoggiaturas because it was so blindingly obvious to those around at the time? I don't think so, but it is also true that no-one seems to have warned continuo players that they "might, at least on some occasions, actually hear vocal notes different from those notated" (Richard Hudson: *Jumping to Conclusions*, p 176) Too obvious to mention? Or evidence against the insertion of appoggiaturas?

Limited advice on where not to insert appoggiaturas comes from a surprising source, Philip Gossett's "Divas and Scholars" (pp 304-5) I say surprising because he also tells us how he has berated conductors for not including them in Donizetti and that "in the performance of Italian opera from this period, the tasteful use of appoggiaturas in recitative (and often in arias) is obligatory" (p.301). But he also considers that, just as tastes in the delivery of Shakespeare's texts have changed, so a modern audience demands a more rapid declamation of recitative that virtually ignores the rests between short phrases (he uses the word sub-phrase) in order to avoid a too weighty and separate result. It sounds sensible and moderate, but does it open the door to too much omission?

In order to investigate whether the Opera Rara recordings mentioned above are following this advice let me take a Donizetti recitative more or less at random – that of Mocenigo's recitative in Act I of *Caterina Cornaro*, "Sei bella, O Cipro". (Not quite at random when most of this article was written the recently arrived recording had been much in my CD player.) It is just twenty bars long, yet it contains twelve blunt phrase endings as well as two written-in appoggiaturas. Underlinings indicate appoggiatura opportunities and slashes the points at which Donizetti indicates a musical rest. The Italian text is from the Opera Rara CD booklet; the translation is mine but based heavily on the same booklet.

Sei bella, o Cipro!/ A te/ versan tesori	You are fair, O Cyprus Foreign vessels pour
Le strane navi,/ a te l'aure felici,/	treasures on you Heaven lavishes on you
E i più vitali rai prodiga il Cielo./	happy breezes and the most vital rays Ah!
Ah!/ Fossi pur soggetta/ alla	Let you also be subject to the Sovereign of
Sovrana/ dell'Adriaco mare!/	the Adriatic Sea But so you will The die is
Ma/ lo sarai / Gettato è il dado,/ compre	cast; these people are bought by me and if a
Son da me queste genti,/ e Cipro in breve,/	friendly star smiles on my thought, Cyprus
Se al mio pensier sorride/ amica stella,/	will soon be a tax-paying handmaiden of
Fia di Venezia/ tributario ancella.	Venice

The first two examples are in fact given appoggiaturas by Donizetti, the rest aren't The recording does insert the ones at "felici" and "Cielo" Because "rai" is in the middle of a phrase maybe it doesn't need one, though there are countless examples in Bellini where similar appoggiaturas occur, and are written in, mid-phrase. The next phrase raises the question of whether or not to phrase over Donizetti's rests and the importance of the sense of the words There are rests but no punctuation marks after both "soggetta" and "Sovrana", and certainly the sense suggests a single thought The recording's Mocenigo, Vuyani Mlinde, phrases over the second but not the first of these and doesn't insert either appoggiatura. With



his slight break after "soggetta" I certainly feel the need for an appoggiatura on that word, with no break I feel the need less strongly, but would prefer it. Phrasing over "Sovrana dell'Adriaco" does, I admit, lessen my need for an appoggiatura, though again, these mid-phrase appoggiaturas are very frequently present in Bellini The rising phrase starting "Gettato" is similar to the one Gossett invents to illustrate when he considers it better to omit some appoggiaturas. The written pitches at "dado" and "genti" double notes in the orchestra's diminished seventh harmony. I am content to leave these unaltered, while wondering if I am wrong to do so, but I think "breve" definitely gains by the insertion and "sorride" and "stella" positively demand them, though Mlinde and Parry obviously disagree. They do provide the equally essential appoggiatura on "Venezia"

Some while ago I asked Andrew Porter about his views, using an example from *Parisina*, the recitative "Con giostre, e contornei" from Act I. The excerpt is longer than that from *Caterina*, taking four pages of vocal score Restricting myself to the ends of phrases, I count 41 blunt endings and 5 written out appoggiaturas Of these 41, the Opera Rara recording under David Parry inserts 13 appoggiaturas and the live recording under Eve Queler just 3 My instinct would be to add all 41, a view with which Mr. Porter concurred. The significance of the figure 41 is that it represents many more blunt endings in *just one* Donizetti recitative than in a *whole* opera by Bellini. For example, I count but 5 in all the recitatives in *La sonnambula* And much the same is true of all the later Bellini operas – I did a rough check on all but one of the post-*Pirata* works.

Treating Verdi's *Nabucco* (1840) and Pacini's *Maria Regina d'Inghilterra* to an appoggiatura count reveals the same story. Each complete act has only a single handful of blunt endings in the recitatives, and there are very few elsewhere in these two operas. *Maria* dates from 1843, following Pacini's return to operatic composition and thus to the period in which he strove to shed the influence of Rossini. But clearly this did not include a fundamental change to the melodic style of his recitatives. In this regard he conforms to the old, except that Rossini didn't notate the required appoggiaturas whereas Pacini did.

If it is correct to perform Donizetti with no, or just a few, appoggiaturas inserted then the logical conclusion is that his recitatives are inherently different from those of Bellini, Verdi (at least up to *Nabucco*) and I suspect Mercadante, Pacini and Vaccai too (though I have consulted only a small sample of works by these last three). This I find difficult to accept: they all were surely using the lingua franca of the period. It is simply Donizetti's notation, rather than his intention, that is inconsistent. Mentally singing through these recitatives I do feel the need for most of these appoggiaturas and I don't think the result is too heavy – I don't want automatic emphases, *tenuti* or *portamenti* from the singers, just the raised (or lowered) pitches. When I hear Donizetti sung without appoggiaturas, many of the blunt endings strike me as wrong notes, especially in downward phrases. I will admit that unaltered upward phrases, particularly those ending with a rising fourth (as written) bother me much less – but where are the sources that allow them? Looking at Vaccai and Lablache, and examining the extract from *Caterina* hasn't provided definitive answers. But over a whole opera the question affects hundreds of notes, and my instinct is that putting in every conceivable appoggiatura would mean far fewer wrong notes than ignoring them or even going with the pick-and-choose method evinced by many performances.

IN MEMORIAM

LESLIE HEAD

21 August 1922 - 7 September 2013

TWO NEW BOOKS IN ENGLISH ON THE BEL CANTO PERIOD

Paul Micio

Bel Canto Bully – The Life and Times of the Legendary Opera Impresario Domenico Barbaja by Philip Eisenbeiss, London, Haus Publishing Ltd, 2013, 300 pages, hard cover.

Writing a biography on an historical character from the world of opera is never an easy task but it becomes much more complicated when the subject of the book was practically illiterate, could not read music and left behind very little informative correspondence. Nonetheless, Philip Eisenbeiss succeeds in giving us an engaging account of this rough and often ruthless theatre manager. The author examines the impresario-composer relationships Barbaja had with Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini, as well as a host of other lesser-known opera composers, all set against the social and.political background of the bel canto era in Naples, Milan, Vienna, Paris and London.

Domenico Barbaja (1777-1841) is a fascinating character and part of his fascination is the fact that he came up from less than nothing to become the most powerful impresario of the nineteenth century Eisenbeiss admirably portrays Barbaja's larger-than-life personality and his Machiavellian ways that were both feared and resented by composers and singers alike. Those like Donizetti and Rubini, who became famous enough, could hardly wait for their contracts to expire so they could attain their freedom and thus demand higher fees than what they were able to get out of the tough, foul-mouthed impresario.

Barbaja started out as a coffeehouse waiter and subsequently became a croupier, a job that would prepare him well for the highly lucrative position of having a monopoly on much of the proceeds from the gaming tables that were set up in the Neapolitan theatres. He was a titan of sorts and proved his great capacities for getting things done, as when he oversaw the reconstruction of the Teatro San Carlo in record time after it burned to the ground in 1816. Thanks to the great power he wielded by then and his enormous income from gambling revenues (he was reportedly wealthier than the Neapolitan King), he advanced part of the rebuilding costs out of his own pocket. Even before the fire, Barbaja and Rossini agreed that the next opera they would produce would be *Otello* However, getting the hedonistic composer to finish the score in time for the reopening of the theatre proved to be no easy task, even though Rossini was then living at the Palazzo Barbaja. The impresario finally had enough of the prevarications from his star composer and locked Rossini in his room until, act by act, he had received the full score which was duly performed for the gala reopening of what was then the most magnificent – and most modern – opera house in all Europe.

Barbaja had recruited Donizetti after hearing several of his early successful operas. The fact that he was a facile composer appealed to the impresario who needed to keep his "machine" working at full tilt to appease the musical appetite of the opera-going public. Donizetti was first commissioned to write for the smaller house in Naples, the Teatro Nuovo, but *La Zingara* was such a success (running 28 nights in a row) that the opera opened the door to the San Carlo, for which Donizetti would write 16 operas. At this time, of course, the genius of the young composer had yet to fully blossom as he was still toiling in the shadow of Rossini. After attending a performance of *Zoraida*, in 1824, Stendhal would pen a letter in which he described the composer in these withering terms. "Donizetti is a tall, handsome young man, but cold and without a shred of talent " But Barbaja knew talent when he saw it and he also discovered and mentored Bellini; most importantly, he introduced him to the librettist Felice Romani Barbaja also owned the rights to many operas, including those by Donizetti. He was thus free to lease them out or resell them as he wished at whatever price he liked which infuriated the composer. Barbaja feared nothing and no one and was often in litigation with

many of his associates, singers and composers, including both Donizetti and Rossini Bellini was one of the few who, because of his enormous ego and high opinion of his own genius, refused to be bullied or underpaid by the gruff impresario.

Barbaja's empire was not confined to Naples and he managed other theatres, such as La Scala in Milan, as well as holding the *impresa* of Vienna. Barbaja also had plans to take his company to Russia in 1825 but, because of the destruction caused by the great flood of 1824, in which about 10,000 people lost their lives, the trip had to be cancelled. Added to this, two of the impresario's leading singers, Josephine Fodor and Luigi Lablache refused to make the arduous journey By the late 1830s, Barbaja was leading the triumvirate that ran the *Società d'Industria e belle arti* which oversaw eight different theatres, but the heyday of Naples as the center of European opera was by then coming to an end. London and Paris, which paid higher fees, attracted the greatest singers. Rossini, who had a seven-year contract with Barbaja beginning in 1815, had moved to the City of Lights in 1824 and Donizetti was eager to leave Naples, Italian censorship - and Barbaja – and to move on to the Théâtre-Italien.

Eisenbeiss' book is enjoyable to read and the author is especially successful in evoking the atmosphere of the opera houses and elegant gambling rooms in the foyers of the Neapolitan theatres at the height of the bel canto era. His portrait of his iron-fisted subject, the ongoing battles with oppressive censorship, and the sometimes capricious nature of the singers and librettists, make us realize all the more what a miracle it is that these masterpieces of lyric art ever managed to get composed Barbaja played no small role in this operatic web of intrigue and Eisenbeiss does not exaggerate when he writes: "The intimacy of the relationship, the proximity of the professional interaction and the sheer intensity of the artistic collaboration that Barbaja maintained with Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and even with Pacini, was of a nature that no other impresario would ever repeat."

Giovanni Battista Rubini and the Bel Canto Tenors: History and Technique, by Dan H. Marek, London, The Scarecrow Press, 2013, 420 pages, soft cover.

In the preface to Eisenbeiss' book reviewed above, the author claims that his work on Barbaja is "neither a work of academic scholarship, nor is it aimed at a specialist audience of musicologist researchers." Contrary to Eisenbeiss' book, Dan Marek's new work on Rubini (1794-1854) aims at being precisely that and it is filled with many musical examples for the more specialist audience and especially for aspiring singers. The last part of the book is dedicated to singing technique and voice production and contains such highly specialized chapters as "Acoustical Phonetics and the Vowel Register "

Marek's work, which is organized chronologically, reads somewhat like a textbook and is a veritable "Who's Who?" of the singers and composers of the baroque period through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Aside from innumerable errors in the spelling and accentuation of French and Italian names, words, and titles that any good copy editor should have picked up, all Anglophone readers should be in his debt for producing such a work because, until now, the only in-depth study of Rubini is the two-volume 900 page magnum opus, *Rubini, l'uomo e l'artista*[1], published in 1996

Through Marek, we follow Rubini's career, year by year, from its not very illustrious beginnings. The author quotes the recollections of Chorley, who adored the tenor, but who was still capable of

[1] Bruno Cassinelli, Antonio Maltempi and Mario Pozzoni, Comune di Romano di Lombardia, Cassa Rurale ed Artigiana di Calcio e di Covo, 2 vol, 1996

giving an honest account of him: "He was in no respect calculated to please the eye; for the openness of his countenance could not redeem the meanness of features impaired by smallpox. His figure was awkward [. .] He rarely tried to act, the moment of the curse in the contract scene of *Lucia* being the only attempt of the kind that I can call to mind. The voice and the expression were, with him, to 'do it all'." To be fair, Rubini's acting seems to have improved with the years even if, as another critic wrote, "the intense passion of his singing [...] forces him, in spite of himself, into fine acting." It was, however, what he did with his voice and his incredible *agilità* that so suited the coloratura repertory he sang, that made Rubini the most celebrated tenor of the nineteenth century. He had an uncommon gift to communicate pathos and to move his audience with what Stendhal calls "the mystical power of the human voice." There are many eyewitness accounts that attest to the effect he had on the public and the emotion he could project: *"Qu'il avait des larmes dans la voix !"* ("What tears he had in his voice!"). Another observer wrote: "Heavens, what a sobbing voice – so much feeling, such a flaming lava of feeling erupts from him. It is enough to drive you mad." Perhaps most important of all, Rubini's voice inspired opera composers – most notably Bellini – to create roles specifically tailored to his unique instrument which he sang and embellished so effortlessly Contemporary critics concurred that the transition in Rubini's *passaggio* was imperceptible and that his long breath line and legato were faultless. Rubini also was capable of singing both lower dramatic parts as well as the higher coloratura roles, the most astonishing example of which was his singing both the title role in Rossini's *Otello* (written for the "bari-tenor" Nozzari), as well as the very high florid part of Rodrigo in the same opera. Like Luigi Lablache, the bass with whom he was so often partnered and who was part of the "Puritani Quartet[2]", Rubini never failed to please his audience, an audience that included royalty and the most elevated aristocratic circles of Europe. Princess and subsequently Queen Victoria, who studied with Lablache, was a great admirer of Rubini and he sang both for her and *with* her at private concerts at Buckingham Palace

Marek quotes many other reviews of Rubini's performances which, as he rightly points out, "have to be filtered through the personal and innate cultural biases of the critics who wrote them " The English were not always receptive to the Italianism of Rubini's singing style, a cultural divide that endured to our own times, as in the case of Franco Corelli who was under-appreciated to some extent by the British press. Some of Rubini's critics (including Wagner, which will not come as a surprise to anyone) felt that he over-embellished what he sang and even Chopin wrote that "he makes endless roulades, often too many *coloraturas*, vibrates and trills continually." However, this style of embellishment was the inevitable product of the training Rubini had received and the continuation of the florid castrati school of singing It should also be kept in mind that his mastery at this type of *fioriture* was precisely what drove the audiences of the romantic period to distraction Rubini, of course, had his own sense of what was appropriate for what he sang and another contemporary critic informs us that: "There are works, the *Lucia*, for example, in which he abstains in toto from *fioriture* "

What impresses the reader about this era is not so much the number of roles Rubini sang (72 before the age of 30; 147 when he stopped singing at about 50) nor the dozens of operas no longer performed, but rather the names of composers whose fame has long since faded. When was the last time anyone has heard an opera by Luigi Majocchi, Giuseppe Balducci, Franco Sampieri, Giacomo Cordella, Dionigio Pogliani-Gagliardi, Luigi Rieschi, Vittorio Trento, Guiseppe Capuzzi, or Francesco Gnecco, to name just some of the composers in whose operas Rubini performed? Aside from the great versatility of his instrument, what also amazes us about Rubini was his prodigious memory: in 1826, for example, he sang no less than 19 operas, 7 of which were premieres, and some

[2] The other two singers were Giulia Grisi (Elvira) and the baritone Antonio Tamburini (Riccardo)

of these roles were sung only days apart. In the following decade, he appeared in 17 different operas for the 1837 London season alone, without taking into account the other roles he sang in Paris that same year. He sang all over Europe and, late in his career, in 1843, he was even engaged by the Imperial Theatres in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Rubini not only sang there but the Tsar appointed him "director of singing" to the Crown and asked him to organize an Italian troupe for the following season, which he did. Thanks to his professionalism and to years of a gruelling singing schedule that was coupled with relentless travel, he retired comfortably to his home at Romano di Lombardia in 1845, at age 51, with one of the largest fortunes ever amassed by a classical artist. At this time, he built a luxurious palazzo (today the Rubini Museum) and it was there he would die on March 3, 1854.

There are many passages in this book that fill one with reverie for what the bel canto era must have been like, overflowing with the musical luminaries who were all in close contact in Naples, Milan, Paris, London or Vienna: Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Balfe, Thalberg, Schumann, Paganini and Liszt, just to name a few (Rubini toured extensively with Liszt in 1842). As Marek writes in one such example of this confluence of musical talent, "Among the many attendees at the final rehearsals for [Bellini's second opera of 1826], *Bianca e Gernando*, were Giovanni Pacini and Gaetano Donizetti, who would both figure prominently in Rubini's future. So was forged the partnership with Bellini, which was ever to be the delight and despair of tenors who attempt to sing such fare as *Il pirata*, *La sonnambula*, and *I puritani*."

As previously mentioned, this book is filled with many exercises for the aspiring singer. Of these, one of the most illuminating is the excerpt from Manuel Garcia's 1842 *Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing* which reproduces an aria by Cimarosa as originally written that also has a second vocal line illustrating how it should be embellished Even for those who might not be fluent in reading a score, this musical citation will prove illuminating. These printed scores are also valuable because there are often no recordings of these operas or even such once-famous arias as *Il soave e bel contento* from Pacini's *Niobe*, a favourite with Rubini as well as the public of the time

Merek is rigorous in his research and yet makes highly subjective pronouncements that will surely raise the eyebrows of more than one reader, such as the somewhat dubious statement that Jon Vickers is "the greatest singing actor of our times." In another untenable assertion, he tells us that Chaliapin was "the greatest *singing actor* of all time" and one wonders by what magical force he has been able to move back in history to make such a judgment. Other generalizations do not hold up or are simply untrue, as when he states that most opera composers, including Donizetti, were specialists in that one genre and "wrote very little music outside of the operatic idiom" One only has to consult the list – more than 30 pages long – of non-operatic compositions by the Bergamasc master published in Weinstock's biography to see the vast extent of these other works[3] Finally, as is unfortunately the case with many people writing today, there is no shift in register from vernacular spoken English (in this case American English) to any kind of more literary writing style. This shortcoming clashes at times with the period and subject at hand, as when the author tells us that Lilli Lehmann was "the all-time champ" or that "Bellini went ballistic "

The major fault with Marek's work, however, is his failure to take a stance on the loss of the tradition of singing the top register of the bel canto literature from the head rather than the chest. There is much disagreement concerning the exact meaning of "head voice" and "falsetto" but, for the purpose of this review, I use these two similar terms loosely when discussing the difference between them and "chest voice" (*dal petto*). In his book of more than 400 pages, Marek never once questions why modern tenors obstinately refuse to sing these stratospheric notes from the head. He speaks

[3] Herbert Weinstock, *Donizetti*, London, Methuem & Co , 1964, pp 371-404

about the dangers of forcing the voice and cites the fact that the voice of Gilbert-Louis Duprez, the first tenor to sing high C from the chest, "was practically gone by the time he was forty-three years old" and yet there is nary a word about returning to interpreting these roles as they were intended to be sung. As with some other tenors of the bel canto era, we know the range of Rubini's voice. roughly from E to B natural from the chest and then from high C to F in falsetto (it is believed that Rubini even sang a high G in *Roberto Devereux*).The last third of the book is dedicated to the "Vocal Technique of Rubini and the Bel Canto Singers." In these chapters, there are very erudite explications about how sound is produced in the human body and how it should be correctly produced (head voice, he explains, is a misnomer and is actually the technique of the "artificially lowered larynx"). These chapters are illustrated with photographs, charts, and printed "vocalises", including Rubini's complete *Twelve Lessons in Modern Singing for Tenor or Soprano*, originally published before 1840, which are duly annotated by the author All of this confirms what we know about how this music was written, how it was intended to be sung, and how it *was* sung by Rubini, and yet the author seems not at all concerned that no one today is singing these roles *come scritto* This is especially surprising in a book one of whose major aims is precisely to teach aspiring artists how to sing the bel canto repertory.

Marek mentions Rossini's well-known aversion to the practice of singing notes that were meant to be sung falsetto but were taken from the chest, and yet, in the final analysis, he has put together a book with many musical examples proving a point that he then does not champion. In 1837, Duprez first sang a high C *dal petto* and, when the composer heard him sing this note from the chest in his own home, he expressed his disdain by checking to see if any of his precious Venetian glass had shattered. Rossini said, in fact, that the sound struck his ear "like the squawk of a capon whose throat is being cut." The high C in question was from his *Guillaume Tell* that premiered in Paris, in 1829, with Adolfe Nourrit in the role of Arnold. Rossini was categorical about how this was to be interpreted "Nourrit sang it in *head voice*, and that's how it should be sung." Bellini, who was so demanding about the quality of voice that sang his music, would certainly have defended the integrity of his own operas with the same vehemence, had he lived into the new age of testosterone-driven tenors

Marek tells us that there is a compilation of sixteen tenors singing the high F of "Credeasi misera" from *Puritani* on You Tube yet he does not say that one *dal petto* rendition is more wrong-headed and often painful to listen to than the next. As Rossini so rightly stated, "That tone rarely falls agreeably upon the ear." Marek also draws our attention to a similar website that features no less than 25 modern tenors belting out the high D in "Vieni fra queste braccia" from the same opera, also equally ear-shattering. If we can now have many talented countertenors singing the baroque repertoire properly, it should not be too difficult to educate young tenors to stop forcing their voices and start singing the bel canto repertory as it was intended At this point it might be well to remember that, during an 1821 performance of a Pacini opera in Rome at which Donizetti was present, Amerigo Sbigoli forced his voice to keep up with the more powerful volume of his fellow tenor, Domenico Donzelli, and thus burst a blood vessel in his throat and died shortly thereafter In his book on Barbaja, Eisenbeiss fares no better as a defender of the head voice tradition, going so far as to say that, "all tenors are expected to sing the upper registers with a chest voice; a *falsettino* would now be jeered off the stage." That sentence should perhaps have ended " would now be jeered off the stage *by an uninformed public* "

It is, of course, impossible to know exactly what Rubini sounded like in *Puritani* and the dozens of other roles he sang but, to this listener's ear, there is one tenor whose interpretation approximates what that sound was· Alain Vanzo. Sadly, Vanzo never sang *I puritani* on stage and never made a recording of it. However, we can hear him sing the high D flat as intended, from the head, in "A te, o

cara" from a 1964 concert, again thanks to You Tube[4] All lovers of beautiful singing who take the time to listen to this velvety sound, seamless legato, exquisite falsetto and robust chest voice all used in the appropriate places will be richly rewarded and will, I believe, get more than a glimmer of what the great Rubini sounded like when he sang this sublime music almost two hundred years ago.

The above few criticisms are happily outweighed by the many merits of both these books that are important contributions to our knowledge of the bel canto period, and this is especially so as they have been written for a large audience in English. We are indeed fortunate to have them.

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[4] http://www youtube com/watch?v=KXhgQneknIw

LATE NOTICES

A staging of *Don Checco*, the most celebrated comic opera by the *barese* composer Nicola De Giosa (Donizetti's most loyal student), is projected for the end of the year (Nov/Dec) in the Teatro di Corte within the Palazzo Reale of Naples. *Cfr* **Paolo Ciarlantini** *L'atteso ritorno sulle scene del Don Checco di Nicola De Giosa* **[in] Newsletter 120 pp23-24**

The 5 act grand opéra *Bouchard d'Avesnes* by the Belgian composer Karel Miry will receive a concert performance in the Ghent Muziekconservatorium on 2 March 2014 at 3pm. *Cfr* **[The Editor]** ***Overtures and Beginners...*** **[in] Newsletter 116 pp4-5**

Luncheon Get-together

We propose to hold another Donizetti Society lunch on Saturday 15th March at 12.30 pm, at Salieri's, 376 The Strand (on the corner of Exeter Street). Their lunch menu has starters at around £4 and main courses at around £7 to £9, (desserts, wine and service are extra), with meat, fish and vegetarian options on offer. They also have an extensive à la carte menu. Do join us if you can.

Please let Alan Jackson know by 9th March if you plan to come or want more details - contact details are on the inside cover, though email is preferred (please put Don Soc Meal in the subject line).

Diary

Brno, National Theatre
Maria di Rohan **31 January, 2/22 February, 2 March, 5 April, 3 May 2014**
(Cond. Ondrej Olos)

Antwerp/Ghent, Vlaamse Oper
Otello **(Rossini) Opera House Antwerp 7-18 February 2014**
Opera House Ghent 28 Feb, 2-9 March
(Cond.Zedda)



Brussels, Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie
Guillaume Tell **(Rossini) 2/5/9/11 March (concert perfs)**
(Cond. Pidò)

London, Queen Elizabeth Hall (Chelsea Opera Group)
I Capuleti e i Montecchi **(Bellini) 16 March 2014 (concert perf)**
(Cond. Robin Newton)
Stiffelio **(Verdi) 8 June (concert perf)**
(w. Nelly Miricioiu)

London, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
La Fille du régiment **3/6/9/12/15/18 March**
(w.Ciofi, Florez, Spagnoli, Podles, Te Kanawa)
Maria Stuarda **5/8/11/14/16/18 July**
(w. Joyce DiDonato, Ismael Jordi))

Avignon, Opéra Théâtre
Le Dilettante d'Avignon **(Halévy) 14 April**

OONY, New York
Roberto Devereux **5 June (concert perf)**
(Cond. Queler)

Caramoor Festival
Lucrezia Borgia **12/18 July (concert perfs)**
(w.Angela Meade, Charles Castronovo Cond. Will Crutchfield)

Buxton Festival
Otello **(Rossini) 17/20/26 July (concert perfs)**

Montpellier, Festival Radio France
Caterina Cornaro **22 July (concert perf)**
(w. Mosuc, Castronovo, Vassallo, Lis Cond. Paolo Carignani)

Wildbad Rossini Festival
Adelaide di Borgogna **(Rossini) 19/23/25 July**
Tebaldo ed Isolina **(Morlacchi) 27 July (concert perf)**

Salzburg Großen Festspielhaus
La Favorite **22/26 August (concert perfs)**
(w. Elina Garança, Juan Diego Florez, Ludovic Tézier, Carlo Colombara Cond. Nello Santi)

Wexford
Don Bucefalo **(Cagnoni) [dates to be announced]**

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