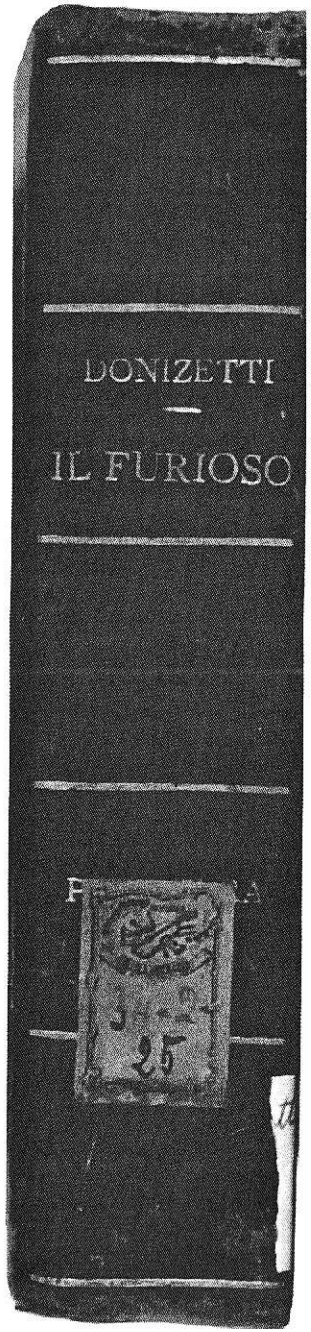


WHY CARDENIO?

The Wild Man of the West Indies

(Il furioso all'isola di S.Domingo)

An interview with James Conway

Bergamo recently revived *Il furioso* as a comedy! Is this not a betrayal of the plot?

Well, there certainly are comic elements in the opera - it is, after all, a semiseria. Perhaps one choses to present the opera within a comic framework, seriously (as would have been the case in its *Don Quixote* setting), or from a very serious position, accepting the comedy as necessary relief. Personally I was drawn to the opera because of Cardenio's extraordinary, even majestic suffering, very nearly matched by his wife Eleonora. The fact that Cardenio's 'wildness', his suffering induced by the unacceptable vision of his wife's infidelity, is interrogated by the witty, practical slave Kaidamà, makes it all the more interesting. Eleonora's wildness is similarly set against Marcella's sweet infatuation for the wild man Cardenio. This opera is not like any other I know. Though it's tone is changeful, its point of view shifting, it has great strength. It is the most Shakespearean of operas, and it struck me as so long before I was aware of the (very different!) Shakespeare/Fletcher setting of the same story.
To be honest, I did feel the Bergamo production lacked dignity or insight. It seemed to me that there was a conviction that it had to be 'sold' to an audience. One should only produce an opera if one loves it. But dignity and insight are not altogether common in opera production, and this performance seemed to please the audience very much indeed. It seemed to have the appeal of highly polished G&S, and that is in itself no bad thing!

What do you think are the up-to-date implications of a romantic opera like this one - a bit frivolous, zany and deliberately extravagant but set on a desert island with black slaves? Kaidamà may seem a minor character but is in many ways the star. Was it this challenge that attracted you to this semiseria parable?

This opera's complexities invite - and I think will repay - close attention. In a world where bonded labour remains the basis of many economies, and where slaves are still at work in most cities and towns, in one way or another, it is highly topical. I am not sure that the libretto's selection of San Domingo - the Spanish half of the island of Hispaniola - is not fanciful, a bit like Manon

Lescaut in Louisiana. It is as if the Sierra Morena (as in Cervantes) was not far away enough, not 'wild' enough, for Cardenio's (and Eleonora's, and perhaps even Fernando's) wildness to be treated and cured. That said, Donizetti gives life to Kaidamà, to Bartolomeo and Marcella, and he gives a strong suggestion of the Governor who will not tolerate Cardenio's refusal to cooperate with the rigid order of plantation society. This is no classless society, but one clearly reflecting the efficient, unsentimental exploitation of the resources, human and vegetable, of an 'innocent' landscape. There are not natives: just people who have come here, freely or bonded, in order to extract profit. I don't think Donizetti was most ready to write Toussaint l'Ouverture, but he was no fool, and knew the play that was his meat. Each character appears in a position of powerlessness - whether rendered insensate by passion like Cardenio, cast ashore as much by terrible guilt as by a storm like Fernando or Eleonora, enslaved like Kaidamà, or caught between the Governor and the wild man in a plantation grid, like Bartolomeo and Marcella. What each discovers is how to act, how to be themselves, how to be free enough to feel pity, even sympathy - which is powerful.

What parameters are used to shape the practical version of such an opera for touring purposes? What editing will be necessary? Is the orchestration (a shipwreck; the hurricane scene for example) not rather daunting in view of the practicalities of preparing such a fantasy for travel purposes?

I don't think so. I am always hearing people say that opera plots are foolish, complicated, risible - even people who say they like opera like to say this most of all. But is a fairy tale silly, or is it like a dream, and as much like truth and history as a dream or a fairy tale?
It is true that what seemed an extraordinary orchestra depiction of a storm in the mid 19th century may just sound like an allegro now, so relentlessly and sensationally scored as every entertainment has become. But I think if you play well (musically and dramatically) and take it all seriously (especially the comedy!) you can at least invite an audience to feel something, to be moved, to see something in a new way. It is hard work - people over 50 (like me) have plenty of defences against feeling, or seeing things in new ways. It is very exciting when those defences are stormed.
What is a shipwreck, actually, in terms of the stage? What is it to be shipwrecked, personally? What is an island, in the theatre? Why are all these people drawn to this island, organised for profit as it is, and how do they not fit in? What makes them repel each other, and then cleave to each other? What does the music tell you about Cardenio's hysterical blindness - what is it that he cannot/must not see?

These are the questions that are important to me. The stage setting and performances should address those questions - at least to the point of posing them, to those who wish to see them. That's where you start - and then you address the practical questions. Although I am not directing this production - that I am leaving to the excellent Iqbal Khan - because of the early stages of the process, I did work on the design with brilliant young Florence de Mare, and I think I was pretty exigent. We reduced and reduced to greater simplicity, deliberately, and I think the result is beautiful.

The plot has a wide basis with some four important characters at least two of whom are parodied for ironic effect. Does this not make an effective condensation unusually challenging? Do you propose to present it in period or in modern costume? Or somewhere in between? With a one all-purpose set?

Yes, I wanted 'period' costumes. Such a lazy term, really... the period of composition, of the setting of the play, of Cervantes, or just all purpose 'days of yore' (which always seems to satisfy). I wanted them because of the shapes, and the reshaping them impose on bodies, because of the contrast between classes in a colonial society, to give some sense and bite to the issue of slavery. There is, indeed, one all purpose island - what we said over an over as a discipline was that we had to end up with a poetic landscape, not any naturalistic landscape. I think that is what theatre is about.
I would reckon three of the characters are parodied, and possibly Kaidamà himself. This is important - funny and bitter. To me, it makes what could seem melodramatic all the more serious.

In view of the "lost Cardenio play" by Shakespeare, is there not a specific relevance in the revival of this opera in Britain?

Absolutely! It is a great hook. I didn't know about it when I started out trying to convince people we should risk all to do this opera, but I do think it explains why I found at least one scene 'Shakespearean' - that in which Cardenio is so maddened by the memory of seeing his wife and her lover (his brother, it seems!) in flagrante that he loses his vision altogether. As operas go, this one has the bitterness and the humour and the truth of a late Shakespeare comedy like The Winter's Tale, Cymbeline or Pericles.
I know people (critics) will say that it is silly, that is was left unplayed for so long for good reason... I am used to that kind of response. It's too bad: so much to lose. But I believe in the piece, and I hope (so much!) that our production, and our excellent singers and players, do it full justice.

James Conway is General Director of English Touring Opera

ETO SPRING SEASON 2015

Hackney Empire	The Siege of Calais The Wild Man of the West Indies	7.30 Sat 7 March 020.8986 2424 7.30 Thurs 12 March
Truro H. for Cornwall	The Wild Man of the West Indies	7.30 Wed 18 March 01872 26 24 66
Poole Lighthouse	The Siege of Calais	7.30 Sat 21 March 0844 406 8666
Norwich Th. Royal	The Wild Man of the West Indies	7.30 Wed 25 March 01603 630000
Sheffield Lyceum Th.	The Siege of Calais	7.45 Tues 31 March 0114 249 6000
Cheltenham Everyman	The Siege of Calais The Wild Man of the West Indies	7.30 Wed 8 April 01242 572573 7.30 Thurs 9 April
Wolverhampton Grand	The Siege of Calais	7.30 Tues 14 April 01902 42 92 12
Snape Maltings	The Wild Man of the West Indies	7.30 Sat 18 April 01728 687 110
Leicester Curve	The Wild Man of the West Indies	7.30 Tues 21 April 0116 242 3595
Warwick Arts Centre	The Wind Man of the West Indies	7.30 Thurs 23 April 024 7652 4524
Exeter Northcott Th.	The Siege of Calais The Wild Man of the West Indies	7.30 Wed 29 April 01392 493 493 7.30 Sat 2 May
Crawley The Hawth	The Siege of Calais	7.30 Thurs 7 May 01293 553636
Canterbury Marlowe	The Siege of Calais	7.30 Sat 9 May 01227 787787
Blackpool Grand Th.	The Siege of Calais	7.30 Tues 12 May 01253 290 190
Buxton Opera House	The Wild Man of the West Indies	7.30 Fri 15 May 0845 127 2190
Durham Gala Th.	The Siege of Calais	7.30 Tues 19 May 03000 266600
Cambridge Arts Th.	The Siege of Calais The Wild Man of the West Indies	7.30 Tues 26 May 01223 503 333 7.30 Wed 27 May

And a further response from Jeremy Silver

*

Bergamo recently revived *Il furioso* as a comedy! Is this not a betrayal of the plot?

The opera is definitely not a comedy, but contains comic elements. The contrast offered by the role of Kaidamà certainly heightens the seriousness and depth of feeling of Cardenio simply by virtue of being different. But it is also via Kaidamà's comic narration that we learn much of Cardenio's tormented state. Were his narration more serious, we would be forced to consider him a tragic figure too, and our feelings for the central couple would be diluted. The other simple reason why this opera is labelled semi-seria, of course, is that it ends with forgiveness and resolution rather than death and destruction. My own preference in 'Figaro' and 'Così', to take two relevant examples, is to let the comic situations speak for themselves without clowning around; the expressive weight of the works then falls naturally onto their deep humanity. I'm hoping the same approach in Furioso will yield similar depths!

What do you think are the up-to-date implications of a romantic opera like this one - a bit frivolous, zany and deliberately extravagant but set on a desert island with black slaves? Kaidamà may seem a minor character but is in many ways the star. Was it this challenge that attracted you to this semi-seria parable?

The nineteenth-century reaction to this piece focussed on the facts that it was the husband who was the victim of the wife's infidelity rather than the other way round, and that this opera was a major contribution to the development of the baritone voice. Both facts still hold our interest. But our reaction to the racial aspect of the work has changed a lot over 180 years. The original setting of the Sierra Morena in Cervantes was simply an expression of remoteness and inhospitable landscape. I guess that Ferretti felt that somewhere more remote was required by the 1830s, and maybe the subconscious connection of the word *Moreno*, denoting the dark rocks of the Spanish mountain range but also meaning 'Moorish' or 'dark-skinned' impelled him to set the opera on the other half of the island on which Haiti had recently become the first post-colonial black-run republic. I work a lot in South Africa, where casting is necessarily colour-blind, and so to conduct an opera in which colour is an intrinsic part of the story is both a new and slightly daunting experience for me. Luckily, Kaidamà's feistiness means he's quite capable of fighting his own battles. So when he's addressed as 'negro', he simply retorts with 'blanco', and we laugh. Incidentally, in our production, Bartolomeo and Marcella are also black singers, so we avoid any 19th-century-style stereotyping!

What parameters are used to shape the practical version of such an opera for touring purposes? What editing will be necessary? Is the orchestration (a shipwreck; the hurricane scene for example) not rather daunting in view of the practicalities of preparing such a fantasy for travel purposes?

Where orchestration is concerned, Donizetti was working within early 19th century conventions. We are therefore able to follow his directions for scenes like the hurricane fairly closely. But I relate the question of the effectiveness of such passages today to the way we play all the music of this style. This music doesn't simply speak for itself, but provides a rich canvas on which, by shaping a melody a certain way or pointing a harmony, one is able to express beautiful and subtle things. The same can definitely be said of baroque music, the performance of which has thankfully undergone a complete revolution in the last 50 years.

Nevertheless a huge amount of editing has been necessary, which I have been working on for several months. We were faced with a choice of two existing editions. The first is a loving restoration of the work by Vito Frazzi in 1958 which forms the basis of several excellent productions since then, and the second is a new score produced by the Fondazione Donizetti in 2013. The former is beautifully produced but is the product of an age with a very different relationship towards authenticity than we have today. Frazzi re-composes elements, making the score more attractive to prospective performers of the 1950s and rekindling interest in a work which had been lost for over 50 years. But I decided fairly early on that I couldn't live with certain elements of the recomposition - in particular the drastic reordering of some of the Eleonora/Cardenio material in act 2 and the newly written and anachronistic orchestral recitatives. This left me with the 2013 edition which received its premiere in a Bergamo in that same year. This score restores the original ordering of material and derives a lot of its information from a manuscript. For this reason it is an invaluable starting point. However, the manuscript on which it is based not only contains palpable errors but gives the overwhelming impression of being a rather raw, first draft. When one sees vocal scores and libretti from the 1830s to the 1850s, it becomes very clear that much of the awkwardness of the manuscript was altered and developed in very positive ways during the early years of life of this opera, and that this was most probably carried out by Donizetti himself. I have therefore taken into account far more material than just the manuscript, as well as having to make numerous other corrections to the score. I should add that, while this might all sound somewhat drastic, one's approach to all bel canto works of the early 19th century will always include a fair amount of weighing up different options in exactly the same way as performers would have done at the time.

Jeremy Silver is the conductor of *The Wild Man of the West Indies*
[Questions by AW]

ÉDITIONS HONORÉ CHAMPION

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Sous la direction d'Alain Montandon

Vient de paraître

Céline Frigau Manning
Chanteurs en scène
L'œil du spectateur au Théâtre-Italien
(1815-1848)
N° 143. 2014. 1 vol., 848 p., broché, 15,5 × 23,5 cm. ISBN 978-2-7453-2565-5. 105 €



Consacré à la production d'opéras italiens, chantés dans la langue originale, le Théâtre royal Italien est l'une des institutions artistiques les plus décisives du premier XIX^e siècle. Mais ses chanteurs sont-ils aussi acteurs ? Que font, sur la scène des Italiens, des artistes aussi célèbres que Manuel García, Giuditta Pasta ou Maria Malibran ? Comment leurs publics décrivent-ils leurs pratiques scéniques et l'émotion qu'ils éprouvent à les regarder ? Voix et gestes enfuis, seules restent des impressions ou plutôt, des souvenirs d'impressions, tissées d'évidences pour les contemporains, perdues pour nous. Pour en retrouver la trace, sont croisés témoignages de spectateurs, sources littéraires, iconographiques et administratives souvent inédites. Car le talent de l'acteur-chanteur, quand il a quitté la scène, existe encore, et surtout, dans le souvenir de ceux qui l'ont vu.
Cet ouvrage s'accompagne d'une chronologie des spectacles représentés au Théâtre-Italien de 1815 à 1848 ainsi que d'un dictionnaire de plus de 220 entrées répertoriant ses chanteurs.
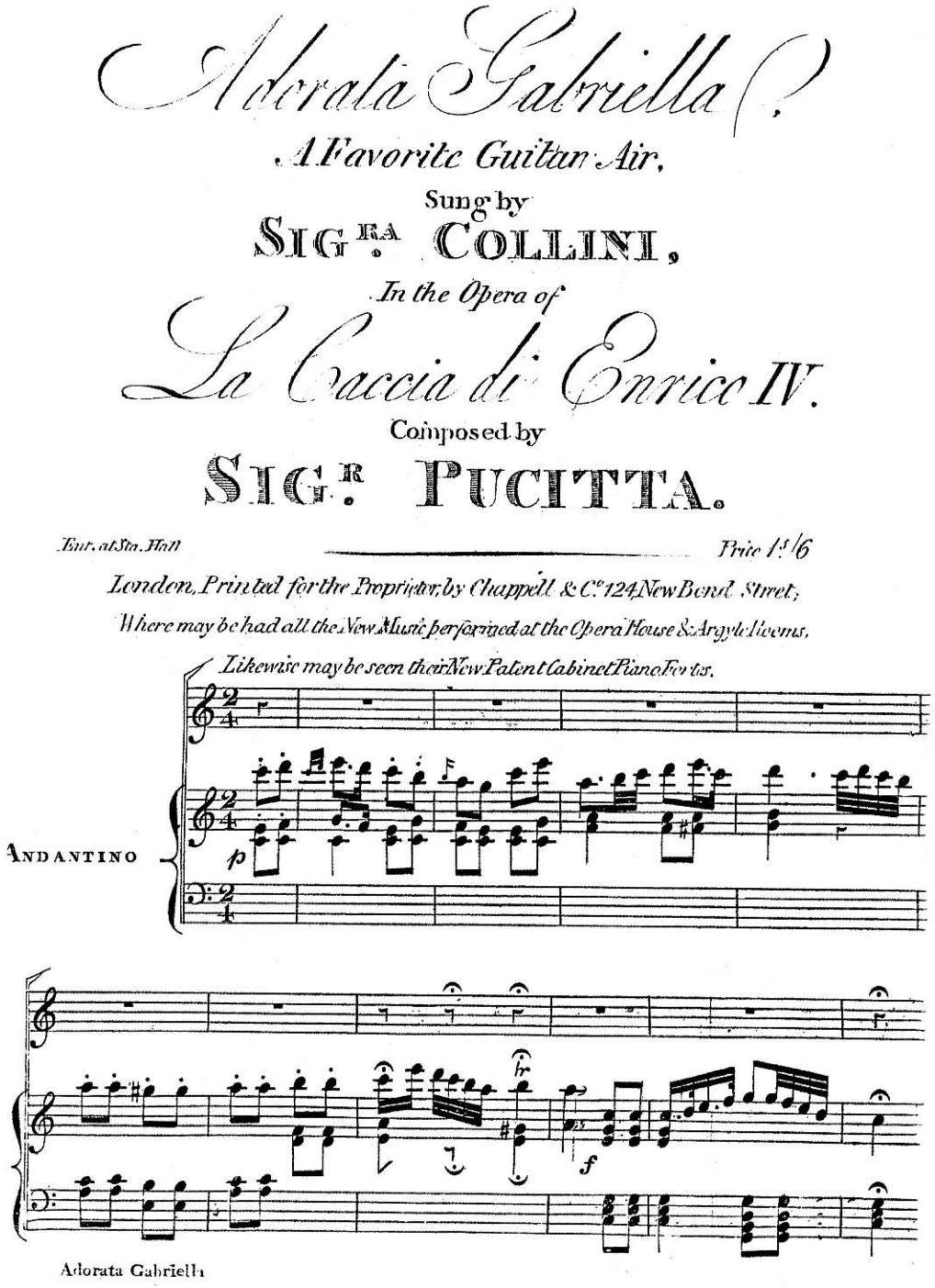
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Ancienne élève de l'École normale supérieure de la rue d'Ulm, ancienne pensionnaire à la Villa Médicis et agrégée d'italien, Céline Frigau-Manning est maître de conférences en études théâtrales et italiennes à l'Université Paris 8 (Vincennes-Saint-Denis). Ses travaux portent essentiellement sur l'opéra et le théâtre en France et en Italie au XIX^e siècle.

* * *

Through eyewitness accounts as well as literary, iconographic and administrative sources, this study attempts to recapture the stage practices of the singers who performed Italian operas at the Théâtre Royal Italien. *It is complement by a chronology of productions at the theatre and a database of over 220 singers.*

La Table des matières est disponible sur la fiche de cet ouvrage, à l'adresse : www.honorechampion.com


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ANDANTINO

Adorata Gabriella

Vincenzo Pucitta

An omitted composer

*

Vincenzo Pucitta: Il tumulto del gran mondo
a cura di Annamaria Bonsante
Cafagna Editore (Barletta 2014), 331pp

Votive compilations addressed to lost composers are not as rare as all that. I have in mind the fine and comprehensive volume, dedicated to Giuseppe Nicolini a composer of similar vintage and neglect, that we owe to the Conservatorio di Piacenza.[1] But poor Pucitta (1778-1861) is a very rare bird indeed - one of the most misrepresented maestri of all he was not born to altruistic comment it would seem, here and elsewhere it has been normal to denigrate his every note: *Le caniche de Catalani* (Angelica's pet dog) is the familiar envoi to be encountered everywhere in would-be belcantist circles whenever anyone remembers his existence. What could he have done to deserve it? On what grounds can he be subject to such a crass and contemptuous dismissal?

Between the covers of this book with its series of individual chapters by very different scholars, among yards of citations, dizzying dates and dutiful disquisitions, is interred a composer with whom we have had almost no contact. His name shone brightly for a few years in tandem with that of the great primadonna (above) while the music he composed both before and after her advent has simply been ignored. His career was cut short. Like Rossini he stopped writing in full flight, but Pucitta was not of his world though their careers overlapped - he was one of those fragile maestri who made the hazardous flight from a Metastasian frying pan into the (French Revolutionary) fire and came out with his pen still intent on the options of the *ancien régime.* A capital crime for all those who put their faith in musical "advance".

It is clear there were indeed contradictions between his evident talent and his wilful self-limitation. But do we find he has been saved for modern ears here? Under this heroic ægis of Barletta?

There are various different kinds of investigation in this compilation: a biographical memoir; technical commentaries; piquant asides; some selective confrontations but very little precise documentation on sources, on the wherewithal of manuscripts, availability of scores etc., all those things necessary for a modern-day autopsy. Annamaria Bonsante

[1] *Giuseppe Nicolini 1762-1842* Various authors. *Atti della Giornata di Studi "Nicolini e dintorni" in occasione del 250 anni della nascita di Giuseppe Nicolini* (Pisa 2012), 317pp

introduces the issues with distinction; the historian Carlo De Paolis follows with an engaging account of Pucitta's noble *civitavecchiesta* background in decline; Paolo Sullo (on *solfeggi*) throws a remote light on the composer who had an instrumental education based on song "*chi canta suona*" (one can only presume); Emilio Sala invokes semantics and a formidable battery of musicological erudition in order to "rescue" Pucitta from the belief that he had no role in the evolution of comedy before Rossini; Daniele Carnini and his *'Pucitta e il Regno Unito'*, with much comforting reference to academic colleagues, has a field day with the myths and misapprehensions of a London, cadet to Paris, clutching at the apple of operatic renown, offering a portrait of the capital with all its frailties viewed through meridional eyes (and treacherously through the eyes of native cartoonists - and very diverting they are too with Prinny and his consort in full disorder - Pucitta's *La vestale*[2] was dedicated hilariously to that improbable vestal virgin Caroline of Brunswick); alas, together with a lot of eager delving into contemporary journalistic spin he takes refuge in the snide barbs of a spaghetti western: "*The opera of Pucitta naturally could not compete with that of Spontini in French or Italian speaking countries, but in England was without rival*" he says of *La vestale* (seemingly unwilling to accept that it was in this comic London that this Italian composer could find himself in the tumult of the *gran mondo*)

Unlike some other papers, the next study was created specifically for this book. The vocal specialist Giorgio Appolonia brings to life the basilisk allure of Angelica Catalani in a detailed account of her background and upbringing that leads to a lengthy account of her prowess in Italy and Portugal, climaxing in London where a jokey "*Rule Britannia*" too is deemed to be appropriate. Here she gets together with Pucitta; that he falls under her spell is clear and they travel together to Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Belgium and Germany but why she chose him is not clear at all (except that he accompanied her at recitals). Important lists are supplied, much genuine erudition goes into this paper but it is general, rather than pointed, devoted to his patron not to the lost composer, the lists - here and elsewhere in this book (also by Giorgio Appolonia) - itemise his operas (Stieger[3] gives a slightly shorter and diverse listing) and some performance details - invoke some intriguing fringe titles, some dates and casts, but no scientific description of the operas, not even the major ones, no roles, no details of librettists or

[2] *La vestale* was composed for Angelica Catalani, King's Theatre, London 3 May 1810

[3] Franz Stieger *Opernlexicon*, Komponisten (Tutzing 1978) Band III 889-90 (calls him *Puccitta*) but supplies details of librettists and (some) subsidiary information

sources, and omit library sigla and fonts necessary for research. This is a shame as this article could have been a real springboard for rediscovery.

It is followed by Piero Mioli, another renowned expert with a witty disquisition upon the disputed authorship of a *Verter* that prematurely (?) emerged as the work by Mayr; then Franco Piperno, with yet another absorbing but also oblique conundrum unravelling a Gordian knot involving Rossini, Pucitta and Nicolini with - at its heart (at least where this book is concerned) - the revelation that a brilliant aria by Pucitta could get a reception in Rome in 1817 that *rivalled that of the pesarese*[4] but to whom, nonetheless, the aria was promptly attributed by music purveyors for the simple reason that Rossini's name on a manuscript found a buyer more easily! [5] A paper concerned with a similar trio (this time Rossini, Pucitta and Generali) by Sonia Arienta follows, with significant historical connotations and a valuable comparison of their preferences for *luoghi* and *locali* in a trio of contemporary works; then comes a study with a further investigation in depth of Pucitta's *La vestale*, this time by Gabriele Cesaretti, doubling or contesting some of the information we have already received but with a useful resumé of the various *Vestale* variants set by his rivals - not just those of Spontini, but also of Pacini and Mercadante.

Paola Ciarlantini brings this frieze of scholarship to its anteclimax with an historical resumé of the theatrical parameters - polemic and librettistic of an Ottocento reluctant to escape its own bonds with much recourse to the reviews of the celebrated *rivista bolognese* "Teatri, Arti e Letteratura". She investigates the notion of novelty and never even mentions Pucitta. The book comes to a conclusion with a notice upon the *antico* Teatro "Ubaldo Minozzi" of Civitavecchia (which too fails to mention Pucitta though it includes his great grandfather's name in a footnote!) capped by a *"Materiali inediti sul Pucitta "milanese" (1840-48)* by Annamaria Bonsante that puts a helpful term to his known career: "*Il Maestro Pucitta in suo gioventù è stato un valente compositore di opere buffe: quindi si è dato al sacro e compone molte cose di facile esecuzione popolare*" [6] or so we hear.

Is it churlish to complain that such a compendium consigned - chapter by chapter - to the interests of scholars, invariably proves rather self-defeating? All too often they contradict one another, information is

[4] The aria was from *La vestale*

[5] This particular paper includes the challenging suggestion that Rossini could have inserted a cavatina of his own into Mayr's *Atalia* in 1822 which Donizetti either did not mention, or did not notice!

[6] According to the Accademia di Santa Cecilia of Rome, a resumé that would have amazed Angelica Catalani, written after the appearance of his *Mille melodie* towards the end of his life

sometimes given twice and sometimes not at all, Pucitta is never in the round, his face comes and goes, there are a lot of glimpses but no definable entity emerges into the light. One feels impelled, most of the time, to fantasize the notion that one could put all the venues, options, competitors, imputations, citations, footnotes, asides, jibes, snide comments and newspaper babble into a sieve, shake it and hope that the minutæ will all fall through and leave the composer lying there exposed, free of scholarly detritus. We have an occasional snapshot, find he was well born, we have a handsome face in a print (the only image that seems to exist, in the V&A of all places) but we have virtually nothing substantial of his compositional career, of his motivation, or of his musical rationale.

One wonders what he actually thought of La Catalani? Three among her "tame" composers: Marcos Portogallo, Sebastiano Nasolini and Vincenzo Pucitta were (what else can you say) doggedly faithful with an elegance and flair that showed real resource in the face of the most testing audiences of the day. None was prepared to enter the lists with Rossini or Mayr of course but their operas were not unworthy either of the stage or of the vocal challenge they were obliged to surmount. All could rise to the occasion, even if that occasion was perfectly predictable (their Andromacas or Boadiceas could die as ecstatically in the last notes of the score and with the same vocal flights of fancy as any Cleopatra or Semiramide then in vogue thanks to the Olympic achievement of a great prima donna). Audiences cheered their music to the echo and would probably do so again given the chance and a suitable diva!

With chapters and footnotes intended to impact mainly upon professors of musicology but otherwise opaque - replete with student terminology and echoes of distant dissertations, evading the too explicit - the reader is soon repelled. Surely books on lost composers are required to communicate with as wide an audience as possible? Scraping the bottom of the barrel in the language of musicology is not helpful to any hopes of rehabilitation.

And then in the end the brutal fact is that Italy did not take pride in Pucitta. It is to be feared, alas, that this hopeful book does too little and too late to make any difference.

Alexander Weatherson

[page 11]
A first edition frontespiece from the most successful of his London operas *La Caccia di Enrico IV* with a libretto by Serafino Buonaiuti, based on *La Partie de chasse de Henri IV* by Charles Collé (1762). First performed at The King's Theatre, London, on 7 March 1809 with Giuseppina Collini in the role of Marietta. Pucitta revamped it later with new music for his patroness Angelica Catalani

ANTONIO GHISLANZONI

IN EINEM NEUEN BUCH BEI EDIZIONI EURARTE DREI LEBEN FÜR DIE OPER

Den Opernliebhabern ist Antonio Ghislanzoni (1824-1893) vor allem als Verfasser der *Aida* für Giuseppe Verdi bekannt, das indes nur eines von rund 60 Textbüchern war, die er für eine Reihe von Komponisten *à la mode* verfasste. Im Jahre 1871 etwa, als Verdis Meisterwerk in Kairo uraufgeführt wurde, arbeitete er auch mit Antonio Cagnoni (1828-1896) und Gaetano Braga (1829-1907) zusammen, aber auch Catalani (*Edmea*), Gomes (*Fosca* und *Salvator Rosa*), Petrella (*Giovanna di Napoli* und *Promessi sposi*, womit sich Ghislanzoni an die Verarbeitung des gleichnamigen Romans von Italiens Nationalglorie Alessandro Manzoni heranwagte) und Ponchielli (*Parlatore eterno*, *Lituani*, eine Donizetti-Gedenkkantate und die unvollständig nachgelassenen *Mori di Valenza*) vertonten seine Verse.

Weit weniger erforscht ist Ghislanzonis Leben über jenes als Librettist hinaus, nämlich als Sänger und als freier Schriftsteller. Indem Pacifica Artuso ihr Buch diesen beiden anderen Wirkungsgebieten Ghislanzonis widmet, füllt sie eine echte Lücke. Der erste Teil des Buches („Il baritono", S. 13-76) verdient besondere Aufmerksamkeit. Darin wird die kurze Karriere Ghislanzonis als Bariton dargestellt. Sie begann 1847 in Lodi (40 km südlich von Mailand) mit dem Debut in der *Luisa Strozzi* des obskuren Komponisten Gualtiero Sanelli (1816-1861) und endete abrupt , als Ghislanzoni 1855 in Mailand (in Teatro Carcano, nicht an der Scala) in Nicolais *Templario* ausgebuht wurde. Er war ein zweitrangiger Sänger, der mit wenigen Ausnahmen dazu verdammt war, schlecht bezahlte Engagements bei provinziellen Bühnen zu ergattern. Aber die Darstellung dieser wenigen Jahre, die Artuso mit akribisch zusammengestellten Quellen rekonstruiert, ist deswegen besonders spannend geraten, weil dadurch dem Leser auch die Schattenseiten der Opernindustrie im Goldenen Zeitalter vor Augen geführt werden, einer bunten Welt, in der sich allerlei Menschenschlag tummelte (ganz anders als heutzutage, versteht sich): zahllose schlecht ausgebildete Sänger, die nach wenigen Jahren ihre Stimme verloren (Ghislanzoni gehört wohl auch zu dieser Kategorie), rücksichtslose *impresari* und skrupellose Agenten (in jener Zeit entstanden die Künstleragenturen modernen Zuschnittes, über die er schon damals Amüsantes zu berichten hat) und – so zumindest in Ghislanzonis Urteil – auch eine Horde von mäßig begabten Komponisten, deren Ehrgeiz in keinem Verhältnis zu ihrem Talent stand. Spätestens bei der Lektüre solcher Passagen schlägt der Puls des Raritätensammlers höher, der sich heutzutage über jede Ausgrabung aus dem *Ottocento* freut und nun einsehen muss, dass Ghislanzoni manche dieser Wiederauferstehungen (etwa der Opern Paolo Carrers) in höchstem Masse überrascht hätte. Der zweite Teil des Buches („Gli artisti da teatro", S. 76-125) ist einem weiteren Leben Ghislanzonis gewidmet, jenem als freier und äußerst produktiver Schriftsteller. In seinen Veröffentlichungen kam Ghislanzoni selbstredend gerne auch auf musikalische Sujets zu sprechen. Die Autorin stellt hier einen umfangreichen Roman über die Oper vor, die „Artisti

da teatro", 1865 veröffentlicht , in denen Ghislanzoni Selbstbiographisches, Historisches (so wenn er sachkundig über berühmte Sänger der Zeit berichtet) und Fiktives vermischt. In Artusos Darstellung sieht es fast so aus, als ob die tragische Geschichte der unglücklichen Liebe eines Tenors und eines Soprans, welche dem Roman zugrundliegt (und, wie es scheint, selbstironisch melodramatisch angelegt ist), eigentlich nur ein Vorwand war, um zum Opernbetrieb der Zeit Stellung zu nehmen. Bei der Lektüre von Artusos Ausführungen bekommt man große Lust, den ganzen Rom zu lesen, der offenbar nie in seiner Gesamtheit nachgedruckt wurde (er ist als Digitalisat über Google jedoch verfügbar). Wäre eine Neuedition nicht eine schöne Aufgabe für einen jungen Musikwissenschaftler, der außerhalb ausgetretener Pfade forschen möchte? Weniger interessant fand schließlich der Rezensent Artusos Beobachtungen zu Ghislanzoni und Verdi im dritten Teil des Buches („Verdi visto da Ghislanzoni", S. 126-158). Pacifica Artuso ist insgesamt kein großer Wurf gelungen. Einige Leser werden sich über den disparaten Charakter dieser Publikation aufregen, die eher einer Aufsatzsammlung als einem durchkonzipierten Buch ähnelt; andere werden schmerzlich ein Register vermissen, wodurch die Fülle von Informationen zu Komponisten und Künstlern der Zeit, die geboten werden, nicht leicht greifbar sind; und niemand muss schließlich die Begeisterung der Verfasserin für den logorrhöischen Schriftsteller Ghislanzoni teilen. Er gehörte zur damaligen literarischen Avantgarde (der lombardischen *Scapigliatura*), aber seine Erzählungen und Romane sind oft literarische Ergüsse eines ungepflegt schreibenden Schreiberlings, der zum Überleben unentwegt veröffentlichen musste. Trotzdem sei dieses Buch vor allem wegen der beiden ersten Kapitel allen Liebhabern der italienischen Oper in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts empfohlen.

Michele C. Ferrari

Pacifica Artuso, *Antonio Ghislanzoni, non di solo Verdi...*, 164 Seiten, Abb., Varenna, EurArte Edizioni 2013, ISBN 978-88-95206-32-5

AUSTRALIA has more than one string to its lyre (see opposite)
The Perth FRINGE WORLD festival, a touring company, is staging *Anna Bolena* for the second time only on that continent!
The following is the programme:

- **Preview performance: 25th January 2015, 6.30pm, Darlington Hall, Darlington, Western Australia**
- **Opening night: 28th January 2015, 7.30pm, St Hilda's Performing Arts Centre, Mosman Park, Western Australia**
- **31st January 2015, 7.30pm, St Hilda's Performing Arts Centre,**
- **Mosman Park, Western Australia**

4th February 2015, 7.30pm, RNDM Performing Arts Centre, Sacred Heart College, Sorrento, Western Australia

Yet again Salieri shows he was no Mediocrity

Douglas M.Bennett

For a long time the US opera houses and musicological resources of the US universities have been able to resurrect the heritage of nearly-lost operas. But with a struggling economy, not to mention the ungrasped nettle of the historical Student Loans hanging over the academic institutions, it seems likely that US musical institutions will struggle to keep up this up. In Europe, a vicious downward spiral seems to have set in on arts budgets, even in the most buoyant sectors such as Germany. It is no longer possible to view the components of the Eurozone as separate sovereign countries, as national cultures (along with their arts) seem to fade into penurious obscurity under the ravenous plague of a federated debt. Meanwhile younger singers struggle to get started as performers, under the rules that govern that profession. I am reminded of the Spartan mothers who told their sons to return from the wars either with or on their shields, but not without them. Tough love, but maybe insufficient arts supervisors have seen fit to fall on their swords in order to free up scarce monies.

So it is with great pleasure that I can tell you of a minor miracle from 'Down Under'. Pinchgut Opera, formed in about the year 2000, has so far put on 13 fully staged productions in Sydney's City Recital Hall. All the operas have been from before 1800, but with their latest (Salieri's *Der Rauchfangkehrer*) they have come near enough to our period. All productions have been broadcast by Australian ABC Classic FM, and with modern technology could be heard via the Internet.

We have read about Emperor Joseph's aspiration to seed a German 'National Singspiel' in the Burgtheater (1778 - 1785). The surviving gem in the repertoire from this scheme is Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio of 1782; still perversely claimed by some as Mozart's most 'perfect' music drama).

Lost since the 18th century has been the work premiered the previous year (ie just after Mozart moved to Vienna): Salieri's *Der Rauchfangkehrer, oder Die unentbehrlichen Verräther ihrer Herrschaften aus Eigennutz* (The Chimneysweep, or The indispensable Betrayers of the Self-interest of their Lordships; an ironic title if ever I heard one, given the bourgeois character of the plot). Its contemporary claims to greater fame (at least 100 productions by 1800) have not protected it from later neglect, until last year. All the more credit, therefore, to Erin Helyard, joint Artistic Director of Pinchgut Opera, for discovering this work and preparing a modern performing edition from

18th Century copies. On top of that Pinchgut have created an idiomatic translation of most of the sung and all the spoken German text into English, which is truly remarkable. The result, even in audio alone, is hugely entertaining and the photos and time-lapse video on the website give evidence of a riotous evening of staged comic opera on the open platform of the Sydney City Recital Hall.

The story is a typical mixture of stereotype buffo characters, and also very much of its time. No real aristocrats appear (but plenty of fake ones), and five of the lead characters are described as accomplished singers, so the cast in 1781 (the same singers for whom Mozart wrote *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and its vocal excesses) are encouraged to show off. The plot takes place within one day. Volpino (little fox) is an Italian chimneysweep who wants to marry Lisel, the cook in the household of the wealthy Mrs Hawk and her stepdaughter. The Hawks are being wooed by Messrs Bear and Wolf who recently won the lottery. The names draw a useful parallel with the laws of the wild forest, and perhaps the subtitle should be rewritten (post-Janacek) as The Cunning Little Fox. Volpino sees an opportunity to make enough money to finance his wedding by pretending to be a fugitive Italian nobleman who can sing. Having demonstrated his singing prowess in a show aria, he becomes singing teacher to the Hawks and both their suitors. From this advantageous position, and with the news of Volpino's supposed nobility seeded in the minds of the vainglorious Hawks, the finale primo consists of a quintet from a German opera (sung in German) which dramatises Volpino's seduction of both Hawks. At the curtain, Lisel stops the show with a display of feminine jealousy that makes Volpino's actions more credible.

Act 2 is concerned with the operation of Volpino's ploy to auction off BOTH Hawks to Messrs Bear and Wolf in exchange for Volpino's withdrawal from the marriage stakes. Arrangements are made for the prices to be paid 'up front'. Meanwhile Volpino has Lisel deliver offers of marriage from him to both Hawks.

The Act 3 denouement of Volpino's grand plan takes place through a deliberate chimney fire in the Hawks' household. Volpino says he will extinguish the fire by throwing himself down the chimney wrapped in a wet blanket. Both Hawks are separately asked to praise his bravery and each to offer him her hand in marriage.

Needless to say it doesn't work out that way. Volpino is no more a chimneysweep than he is a nobleman, so further chaos comes from the arrival of the Master Chimneysweep and his apprentices. Finally TWO Volpinos appear wrapped in blankets, one from each of the Hawks' rooms (the second an unwitting colleague).

When the layers of mistaken motives and perceptions are peeled away, Wolf and Bear are able to demolish Volpino's claim to be an aristocrat, and all but Volpino and Lisel are left to nurse their hurt prides. In conclusion Mrs Hawk grants Lisel her freedom from drudgery, and Volpino and Lisel are set up for bourgeois marriage.

In the finale ultimo everyone ponders the outcome of a 'crazy day': does that sound familiar?

For all the familiarity of the plot, it is the music that is the bigger revelation. Little had prepared me for the skill with which Salieri lampoons or simply exploits the many genres that were incorporated into Singspiel. Everything from simple folk tunes to elaborate Italianate arias and complex ensemble finales: the things we too easily attribute to the inventive brain of Mozart.

When, after *Die Entführung aus dem Serail,* Emperor Joseph accused Mozart of using 'too many notes' his intention must have been sarcastic because Salieri had demonstrated just as great a surfeit of burgeoning invention only the year before. This all shows that our view of Salieri may have been distorted by the revival of his serious works for Milan and Paris. Rather than *Tarare* (a rather boring work by Beaumarchais who didn't like da Ponte's *Nozze di Figaro*: Beaumarchais could never have turned his play into an opera) and *Europa riconosciuta* (a very conventional *opera seria* for the opening of *La Scala*) we should be looking at his comedies like *Prima la musica e poi le parole* (the far more interesting work that competed with Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor* for the attention of Joseph's guests: perhaps Mozart had been expected to 'win' with a German Singspiel, but it's fairly clear that the Italian Salieri won on the quality of his thoughtful comedy). But it is not just Salieri's reputation that is enhanced by The Chimneysweep. It is Pinchgut's effervescent performance that makes the opera so convincing. There really was no weak link in the small cast. Although most are young and have Australian roots, their careers are already international. I would mention in particular Amelia Farrugia (Mrs Hawk), Alexandra Oomens (Lisel) and Stuart Haycock (the irrepressible Volpino). But my greatest accolade must be reserved for Erin Helyard and the Orchestra of the Antipodes in making it all work.

To return to where I started, the most impressive part of Pinchgut's achievement is how they manage to do a convincing staging on the open platform of the City Recital Hall (see photo). It is nothing like the usual semi-staged concert performance with a bit of acting, and colour-coding of dresses to distinguish the leading ladies. All Pinchgut's productions have been fully staged. Without a proscenium, the boundary between

audience and performers disappears, which for a comedy like The Chimneysweep seems to me almost ideal. For those desiring *post facto* continued enjoyment, CDs of The Chimneysweep (music only, I'm afraid) can be ordered from the Pinchgut Opera website. I will try to hold on to my recollections of The Chimneysweep broadcast, and maybe even buy their recording.

Of course, there are others doing productions in a similar cut-down style. Bampton Classical Opera are doing Salieri's *La grotta di Trofonio* this coming summer, and taking it to London in September. The plot is not as promising as The Chimneysweep (it is more like *Così fan Tutte* than *Le Nozze di Figaro*) but it will be in English (unlike the Christoph Rousset recording of that opera on Ambroisie AMB 9986) and I shall make every effort not to miss it, and will report back here if I do.



Scompare a novant'anni il tenore Carlo Bergonzi

UNA VOCE *SOMBRE* PER IL DRAMMA DI EDGARDO

Grande arte, lunga carriera, molti personaggi,
Edgardo e Nemorino con Manrico e Alvaro

Il 22 marzo del 1985 il Comunale di Modena rappresentò *Lucia di Lammermoor*, uno spettacolo mutuato dall'Opera di Genova sopra una partitura revisionata da Jesús López Cobos (ciononostante senza la scena della torre): protagonista era la brava Nelly Miricioiu, e deuteragonista Carlo Bergonzi, il grande tenore italiano scomparso a Milano il 25 luglio scorso (a novant'anni, compiuti 12 giorni prima ovvero il 13 luglio). Quella sera il sottoscritto, che credeva di conoscere bene l'opera amatissima e di possederne le strutture fondamentali, ebbe la nozione precisa di quanto sapeva senz'avervi troppo riflettuto: che "Sulla tomba che rinserra" è veramente la prima, drammatica, scultorea parte del duetto d'amore, che finirà liricamente con "Verranno a te sull'aure". La scrittura donizettiana anticipa qui un procedimento della "pazzia" della primadonna: decide cioè di sacrificare la melodia, quel parametro musicale che nelle vene di Gaetano scorreva freschissimo, proprio mai vinto da stanchezza (come i compagni di Normanno), al recitativo, al declamato, all'arioso. Strumento privilegiato della verifica, quell'indimenticabile serata, fu per lui l'interpretazione di Bergonzi (che, da va sé, avrebbe cantato la "bella morte" di Edgardo da par suo), un tenore abituato a cantare Verdi con tale colore di voce, pertinenza di stile, efficacia di pronuncia da rendersi immediatamente pronto al capolavoro donizettiano, al suo tenebrosissimo sir di Ravenswood, all'antica creazione di Gilbert Duprez.

Nato a Vidalenzo (Parma) nel 1924, dopo inizi baritonali Carlo Bergonzi ha riesordito come tenore nel 1951 e per almeno 44 anni, in placida concorrenza con colleghi effettivamente straordinari come Del Monaco e Pavarotti, ha cantato in tutto il mondo (e spesso anche inciso) un ampio repertorio compreso fra la *Norma* di Bellini e la *Turandot* di Puccini; poi ha chiuso la carriera nel 1995 con un concerto a Vienna, solo occasionalmente ripresentandosi in seguito (ma all'ambito personaggio di Otello è giunto, in concerto, nel 2000). Pregevole in campo romantico e verista, Bergonzi ha trionfato soprattutto come interprete di Verdi, in molte esecuzioni integrali e in un famoso recital discografico comprendente un'aria per ogni opera (non tutte le arie di Verdi, come s'usa dire, ché allora per Manrico e il Duca avrebbe dovuto cantarne tre e tre). Sopra una voce baritonale, scura e morbida, l'emissione agguerritissima gli ha conquistato la seconda ottava, mentre istinto, musicalità, tenacia ed esperienza hanno forgiato un'interpretazione vibrante ma misurata, attenta alla scansione ma mai al prezzo della cantabilità. Memorabili opere come *Luisa Miller*, *Il trovatore*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *La forza del destino*, *Don Carlos*, *Aida*, non senza i *Pagliacci* di Leoncavallo, la *Tosca* di Puccini, l'*Andrea Chénier* di Giordano, la *Lucia di Lammermoor* e lo stesso *Elisir d'amore* di Donizetti.

La discografia ufficiale è molto ampia, visto che la sua presenza non era costretta nei limiti di una sola casa (e quindi si dava in più parti e con compagnie diverse), e quella ufficiosa, cioè dal vivo, sterminata, con almeno, tanto per fare un esempio, cinque edizioni di *Aida*. La prima Tosca della Callas aveva duettato con Di Stefano? la seconda l'avrebbe fatto con Bergonzi. Il primo Radamès della Tebaldi era stato Del Monaco? il secondo doveva essere Bergonzi (in disco, naturalmente, ché in teatro c'era ogni libertà). Due le edizioni ufficiali di *Lucia di Lammermoor*, a fianco di Anna Moffo e di Beverly Sills: e la Callas non ebbe dubbi, allorché disse all'insigne artista che il cantabile di "Fra poco a me

ricovero" e "Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali" nessun collega gliel'aveva mai cantato come lui (si spera solo che Pippo, Edgardo tante e tante volte in scena e in studio da Serafin a Karajan, non l'abbia poi saputo).

Richiesto un giorno di esprimersi sulla tecnica vocale di illustri precedenti come Caruso e Gigli, Bergonzi sbottò: ma lasciate stare, Enrico e Beniamino avevano l'oro in bocca, avevano avuto tutto dalla natura, cantavano benissimo fin dall'inizio; io invece la voce me la sono dovuta costruire, gli acuti li ho dovuti conquistare nota per nota, semitono per semitono. Così modesto, lucido e intelligente, Bergonzi aveva una voce che classicamente si sarebbe detta di "tenore serio" (oggi anche baritenore), cioè *sombre*, centrale, del colore del bronzo, non necessariamente spinta fino agli acuti estremi nel cosiddetto registro di petto. Tuttavia lo studio l'ha guidato e sempre governato fino al possesso degli acuti necessari a "Di quella pira", "Ingemisco", "Che gelida manina", "Gli enigmi sono tre"; e in definitiva non c'è dubbio che la sua arte tenorile sia stata fra le più luminose del Novecento, pari e spesso superiore a quella dei maggiori colleghi citati (e anche dello stesso Corelli, che gli acuti, come si suol dire, invece li aveva in tasca).

Ma la caratura e l'emissione classica della sua voce avrebbero reso idoneo Bergonzi anche al dramma serio del Settecento, per esempio all'*Idomeneo* e alla *Clemenza di Tito* di Mozart. Del resto, se non gli era mai capitato di cantare il Rossini serio a suo tempo creato da Andrea Nozzari (e ancora oggi a Pesaro il Rinaldo di *Armida* lo canta un valente tenore chiaro come Antonino Siragusa), quando pervenne al Pollione di Bellini fece faville: nemmeno Mario e Franco avevano inteso quel recitativo, quella cantabilità, quella ritmica con altrettanta consapevolezza stilistica ed espressiva. E siccome la parte di Pollione fu tagliata su misura per la voce di Domenico Donzelli, ecco che non solo l'*Otello* di Rossini (fatto per Nozzari e tosto passato a Donzelli) gli si sarebbe attagliato perfettamente, ma anche il povero, vecchio, demente, spagnolissimo don Ruiz Padilla, nella *Maria Padilla* di Donizetti, avrebbe tratto nuova (o antica) linfa da una sua interpretazione.

Non solo: chi canta Ernani e Jacopo Foscari con tanta romantica nobiltà, avrebbe potuto cantare egregiamente anche altri personaggi donizettiani, il Poliuto già recuperato da Corelli e quel Roberto Devereux che, schiacciato dalla regale prepotenza di Elisabetta, fatica tanto a sembrare un *title-role*. Nemorino invece l'ha cantato, Bergonzi, ché l'*Elisir d'amore* è opera di gran repertorio gradita a tenori di ogni specie, a quelli "di grazia" come a quelli "spinti": in particolare lo impersonò a Firenze il 31 maggio del 1967, e ancora una volta si scoprirono rare pieghe lirico-drammatiche come "Adina, credimi" e "Ai perigli della guerra" (oltre, s'intende, a riscoprire la romanza popolarissima).

La *Carmen* di Bizet, il *Faust* di Gounod e la *Manon Lescaut* di Puccini hanno fatto appena capolino agli inizi, nella carriera di Bergonzi (a causa forse della concorrenza di Corelli e Kraus); ma Verdi sempre, per esempio *La forza del destino* dal 16 luglio 1951 (RAI) al 29 luglio 1987 (Ravenna). Chi scrive ricorda anche quest'ultima recita, in particolare quel formidabile stemma che "splende, splende come rifulge il dì"; e ricorda anche la sorpresa di un'*Aida* scaligera del 28 gennaio 1976: sotto la bacchetta gentilmente verdiana di Schippers, cantarono la Caballé e Bergonzi. Lui fu protestato, dopo la romanza, a causa di un acuto veramente troppo calante sopra l'arduo "sol"; ma quando pervennero al lirismo di "O terra addio", due cantanti dalla carriera foltissima e non sempre indenni dalla *routine*, fecero proprio miracoli: e al miracolo gridò il pubblico della Scala, dopo un "si schiude il ciel" probabilmente ed letteralmente inaudito. *Requiem aeternam* e onore imperituro a Carlo Bergonzi.

Piero Mioli

Les Martyrs – the new passages in the Opera Rara recording

There are three passages in the new Critical Edition of Donizetti's *grand opéra Les Martyrs* edited by Flora Willson for Ricordi that had not been performed until the concert performance conducted by Sir Mark Elder of the opera mounted jointly by Opera Rara and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment on 4th November 2014. These will also appear in the recording made in the week prior to the concert and due for release next Spring. All of them were presumably cut with Donizetti's authorisation before the premiere of the opera in 1840.

(I should here declare an interest in that I have made a contribution to the financial appeal supporting this recording.)

The first, Appendix 1a in the new vocal score, is of just 26 bars and occurs just before the two bars of recitative (O ma mère, ma mère!) just before Pauline's aria. The words are:

> Toi, qui lis dans mon cœur, ô ma mère,
> ô toi, qui fus témoin de l'amour de Sévère,
> de ces nœds par toi-même approuvés!
> et qu'hélas!
> a pour jamais brisé le destin des combats,
> de l'époux généreux que me donna mon père,
> redis-moi, redis-moi les vertus, le noble caractère;
> dis-moi qu'il faut l'aimer … et pour mieux le chérir,
> de l'amant qui n'est plus, chasse le souvenir!

Here, more explicitly than in the following aria, we learn of Pauline's dilemma; shè still loves Sévère, but her sense of honour still binds her to Polyeucte; she wants to love Polyeucte and banish Sévère's memory. The music is a fluid mixture of straightforward recitative and expressive arioso. The alternative offered on the word "l'amant" is surely an object-lesson on how to ornament Donizetti. I certainly welcome this addition.

Appendix 1b in the new edition is a passage of 156 bars very shortly before the entrance of 'un Chrétien' who announces the arrival in Mélitène of a fierce pro-consul who of course turns out to be Sévère, Pauline's first and passionate love. This section was not resuscitated for the concert and doesn't appear on the recording, I am told, for reasons of length. It repeats some of the words of this Act I finale, but the excision does also remove Polyeucte's explicit affirmation that he has been baptised into the Christian faith. The missing words include the following:

Pauline: En vain ils veulent te séduire;
Polyeucte si tu me chéris,
Abjure un funeste délire,
Reviens, reviens à nous!
Polyeucte: Je ne le puis.
Pauline: Viens malheureux!
Eh bien! Pour sauver ce que j'aime,
À mon père, à l'instant j'irai

dénoncer leur culte abhorré!
Polyeucte: Va donc me dénoncer moi-même!
Pauline: Que dis-tu?
Polyeucte: Leur sort est le mien!
Sur mon front a coulé
l'eau sainte du baptême!
Néarque: et chœur Il est à nous, il est chrétien!
Pauline: Ah! Toi?
Polyeucte: Oui.

Without these lines the sentence in the programme synopsis "Pauline's threat to denounce [the Christians] to her father precipitates Polyeucte's confession that he is now one of their number" seems not to take place, at least not with Polyeucte as a baptised Christian. I suppose it could be argued that the truth is nonetheless evident to Pauline, but I regret this omission of this passage that makes it explicit. Incidentally, apart from the subtitle to Act I of *Poliuto*, "Il battesimo", that opera too is merely implicit about the nature of the Christian ceremony that Pauline overhears.

The third appendix 1c is another substantial passage, 96 bars, between the two verses of Sévère's Act II cabaletta that Donizetti replaced with a much simpler and more conventional 12 bar link. The text runs:

Polyeucte: Voilà le proconsul, ce Guerrier magnanime
qui, des chrétiens zélé persécuteur,
vient exciter contre eux sa brillante valeur?
Sévère: De César blâmez-vous le décret légitime?
Polyeucte: Défendre le malheur vous parait-il un crime?
Pauline (à S): Ah! Polyeucte honore et respecte un héros!
Polyeucte: Polyeucte a toujours méprisé les bourreaux!
Sévère: Obéir à César vous est un devoir!
Polyeucte: Peut-être au dessus de César il est un autre maître.
Sévère: Et lequel?
Pauline: (à P) Ah! de grâce!
Sévère Lequel?
Callisthènes O blasphemes nouveaux!
Outrageant de nos dieux la majesté supreme,
on pretend qu'en secret, au milieu des tombeaux
un chrétien cette nuit a reçu le baptême!
Polyeucte: (à S) Eh bien! Que tardez-vous à punir le forfait?
Valeureux proconsul, vos licteurs sont-ils prêts?
Sévère: Ils feront leur devoir!
Pauline (à P): (Ah! j'ai votre promesse!)
Sévère (à C): Poursuivez le coupable.
Pauline (à P): (Ah! pour moi taisez-vous.)
Néarque (à P): Pour vos frères! Dumoins.
Sévère (re P): Ah! pour lui sa tendresse redouble la fureur de mes transports jaloux.
Pauline: (Taisez-vous!)
Néarque: (Pour vos frères!)

Polyeucte: Dieu puissant qui voit mon zèle, que ta foi règne en son cœur!
puisses-tu prendre pour elle et mes jours et mon bonheur.
Dieu puissant …etc
Pauline: Ah, Dieu puissant qu'ici j'implore et qu'il brave en ses discours.
Néarque: Dieu puissant toi que j'adore, que leurs yeux s'ouvrent au jour.
Sévère: Ah! pour lui … etc
Félix: Jupiter, Jupiter, que j'implore ah! toi qu'ici j'implore!

This section takes some seven minutes and we see that Polyeucte goads Sévère in a terse dialogue, Pauline and Néarque plea for restraint, Callisthènes thunders against the insults to his pagan gods and all pray to their own gods in an ensemble introduced by a mini-aria for Polyeucte, before Sévère bursts in afresh with his anguished cabaletta repeat. It is a powerful passage and perhaps the longest link that Donizetti ever wrote between the verses of a cabaletta.

The last of these four appendices is the shortest, just 12 bars, and consists of a prayer that Polyeucte sings after his line "Ce que de tout mon sang je voudrais acheter" in the recitative before the Larghetto of the Polyeucte/Pauline duet in Act IV.

Seigneur, do vos bontés il faut que je l'ottienne!
Elle a trop de vertus pour n'être pas chrétienne!
Avec trop de mérite il vous plût la former,
Pour ne pas vous connaître et ne pas vous aimer!

This short Andante in Ab minor is eloquent; one is tempted to say that it prompts the celestial light that shines a couple of minutes later to convert Pauline in the *tempo di mezzo* of their duet.

There is in fact one other very short cut that has been restored, a single page of manuscript that Mark Elder decided to include in both the concert and the recording, but too late for inclusion in the vocal score of this new edition. It occurs at the pause just before the cabaletta of the Pauline/Sévère duet in Act III. For obvious reasons, readers will have to wait for the recording to see its text.

These additions of 'new' music will be of interest to Donizetti complete-ists. On the basis of the concert and the BBC broadcast a few days later they are beautiful and worthy of exhumation. Who knows why Donizetti cut them? But the importance of the concert and forthcoming recording lies also in two other ways: it was superb and it confirmed *Les Martyrs* as a great and moving opera.

Elder loves this repertoire and he drew excitement, precision, lyricism and drama from all his forces. Every tempo sounded natural, nothing was exaggerated and nothing was understated. Instrumental solos, particularly those for bassoons and clarinet, were exquisite; the period orchestra sounded refined or savage as required – Berlioz' *Grande Messe des Morts* meets *Aida*. His cast responded admirably. Polyeucte was sung by Michael Spyres, who commands both the French style and its high tessitura wonderfully. His cabaletta "Oui, j'irai dans leurs temples!" with its climactic high E (written in the score) brought down the house. But for me, the preceding cantabile "Mon seul trésor, mon bien supreme" was the high spot of the whole

evening, sung with superb grace, control and pianissimos. His wife Pauline was Joyce El-Khoury who equally commanded her role, whether in legato or coloratura passages, with her tone warm, pure and gleaming throughout its range. Ideally I would wish for a slightly tighter vibrato from David Kempster as Sévère, though he coped superbly with the high tessitura of this fascinatingly complex role. Basses Brindley Sherratt as Félix and Clive Bayley as Callisthènes were excellent; Wynne Evans as Néarque and the excellent Opera Rara chorus made their mark.

Donizetti wrote *Les Martyrs* for Paris, reworking his opera *Poliuto* that for censorship reasons was not given in Naples. The reworking not only involved translating the text from Italian to French, but also the addition of new material to words by Scribe, and altering the existing material to conform to current French taste. Thus orchestration was enlarged, new recitatives were written, the role of the chorus was expanded giving more opportunities for scenic display, and a ballet included (compulsory for a *grand opéra* in Paris in 1840). This concert included only one of the ballet movements, though all will appear on the recording. So which is preferable, *Poliuto* or *Les Martyrs*? Some will prefer the relative concision of *Poliuto* and will say that the big moments of *Les Martyrs* are already there in the earlier work. But really they are two different operas that thanks to the French language, new structures and new orchestration inhabit different sound worlds. I was totally convinced by this *Les Martyrs*. Acts I and II have most of the newly composed music, much of it heightened expressive recitative and I was amazed how quickly those two long acts passed. My French-speaking companion was approving of the cast's diction, helped no doubt by Opera Rara's language coaching.

Les Martyrs has been revived before: London (in concert) and Bergamo in 1975, Venice (1978), Nancy (1996) and Reggio Emilia (1997). The Bergamo and Venice performances have appeared on CD and a very few copies are available through Amazon, though at vast price. The Venice performance under Gelmetti with Garaventa, Gencer and Bruson has miserable sound, some wretched orchestral playing, much inaccurate ensemble (Gencer particularly guilty), a couple of upward transpositions in the tenor's cabaletta (to compensate for leaving out several of the highest notes?), some cuts and the substitution of much Italianate can-belto for impassioned French nobility and taste. On the basis of this concert, the recording from Opera Rara will correct all this. Quite simply, the concert performance of *Les Martyrs* was been my operatic highpoint of 2014 and I can't wait for the release of the recording.

Alan Jackson



{Note by the Editor: An Uncritical Edition? Whether a performing edition of an opera that includes sections of music conjecturally discarded by the composer can be described as a "Critical Edition" is a moot point. Extra material of this kind is usually included in an appendix to the printed score of the published critical version, the historical *a priori* decisions of the composer being respected rather than overthrown in any alternative contingency however scientific it may appear to be]

Pane, amore e Donizetti

«Questo spartito, bello dal principio al fine, ha meritato il favor generale. [...] Viva dunque Donizzetti [*sic*]», scrisse Gian Jacopo Pezzi sulla *Gazzetta Privilegiata di Milano* il 14 maggio 1832: parole, scritte a commento della prima assoluta dell'*Elisir d'amore*, che potrebbero essere riferite, quanto al «favor generale», anche alla sua ripresa di sabato 11 e domenica 12 ottobre 2014 al Teatro Municipale di Piacenza. La piazza piacentina ha deciso infatti di aprire con questo titolo la stagione lirica, che continuerà con *Falstaff*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *Don Giovanni La voix humaine*, *The telephone* (due opere in un atto, queste ultime, che andranno in scena la stessa sera, la prima su libretto di Jean Cocteau per la musica di Francis Poulenc, la seconda interamente di Gian Carlo Menotti) e *I due Foscari*.

Scorrendo la cronologia della produzione donizettiana, si scopre che il compositore mantenne, dal 1826 al 1840 circa, una media di quattro opere nuove all'anno. Il 1832 rientra in questa media e vide la nascita di *Fausta* (su libretto di Domenico Gilardoni; Napoli, Teatro San Carlo, 12 gennaio), *Ugo, Conte di Parigi* (su libretto di Felice Romani; Milano, Teatro alla Scala, 13 marzo), *L'elisir d'amore* (su libretto di Felice Romani; Milano, Teatro della Cannobbiana, 12 maggio) e *Sancia di Castiglia* (su libretto di Pietro Salatino; Napoli, Teatro San Carlo, 4 novembre). Fatta eccezione per l'*Elisir*, melodramma giocoso non esente da una certa vena di umanissimo patetismo, gli altri tre titoli del 1832 dimostrano una chiara apertura del Donizetti di quel periodo verso il soggetto storico o pseudostorico a conclusione tragica, secondo i gusti del pubblico dell'epoca, che ricercava vicende di sentimenti calate in contesti verosimili, in parallelo a quanto accadeva per il romanzo, che in Italia ebbe la sua espressione maggiore (o, meglio, maggiormente conosciuta) nei *Promessi Sposi* di Manzoni. Nella sola produzione donizettiana, e, al suo interno, in quella dedicata ai soli teatri milanesi, tra i titoli che ricorrono al *vero storico* per strutturare la vicenda spiccano *Anna Bolena* (su libretto di Felice Romani; Milano, Teatro Carcano, 26/12/1830) e *Maria Stuarda* (su libretto di Giuseppe Bardari; Milano, Teatro alla Scala, 30/12/1835). Ma se *Anna Bolena* fu accolta fin dall'inizio molto favorevolmente, *Ugo, Conte di Parigi*, (l'unico titolo serio milanese del 1832), pur avendo tutte le carte in regola per assecondare il pubblico milanese – soggetto umano in cornice storica (l'amore di Bianca, principessa di Aquitania, promessa a Luigi V, per il conte Ugo), conclusione tragica (suicidio di Bianca per avvelenamento) – e pur avendo incontrato un discreto successo, grazie anche alla promettente compagnia di canto (che comprendeva tra l'altro anche Giuditta Pasta), non superò le cinque recite, sostituito con *Norma* di Vincenzo Bellini, il cui debutto era avvenuto, sempre alla Scala, il 26 dicembre dell'anno precedente, inaugurando così la stagione di Carnevale e Quaresima del 1832 (al ritiro anticipato del titolo contribuì tra l'altro anche la censura austriaca, che eliminò i due regicidi previsti

dalla vicenda originale). Inaspettatamente, però, in Milano il successo arrise a Donizetti appena due mesi dopo: visto il trionfo di *Anna Bolena*, andata in scena nel 1830 al Teatro Carcano, il Teatro alla Scala, suo rivale, decise di puntare nuovamente sul Bergamasco e, dopo la parziale disfatta dell'*Ugo, Conte di Parigi*, lo ingaggiò per un'altra opera da mettere in scena alla Cannobbiana, che della Scala costituiva una sorta di *dépendance*. Mai scelta fu più indovinata: e il successo tributato a questa nuova creazione teatrale, ovvero *L'elisir d'amore*, avrebbe sancito il pieno dominio, da parte di Donizetti, dello stile comico, dopo le prove andate a segno nello stile tragico. Per la verità, Donizetti non era, in questo campo, alla prima esperienza: opere come *L'ajo nell'imbarazzo*, *Olivo e Pasquale* e *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali* sono tutte antecedenti al 1830 e già dimostrano una padronanza degli stilemi comici, derivati dalla scuola napoletana e assurti al loro massimo livello in Rossini; ma con l'*Elisir* si perviene ad una comicità più umana, meno ridanciana, dove il filone comico si intreccia col filone patetico, in una commistione di generi (il "dramma semiserio") che Donizetti avrebbe continuato ad esplorare l'anno successivo, nel 1833, con *Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo* (torna in mente una frase delle *Opinioni di un clown* di Heinrich Böll: «Tutti sanno che un *clown* deve essere malinconico per essere un buon *clown*, ma che per lui la malinconia sia una faccenda seria da morire, fin lì non arrivano»).

Per *L'elisir d'amore* Felice Romani trae spunto da *Le philtre*, libretto di Eugène Scribe del 1831 musicato da Daniel Auber. Da due soggetti di Scribe, *Le coiffeur et le perruquier* (1824) e *L'homme noir* (1820, in collaborazione con Jean-Henri Dupin), Domenico Gilardoni aveva già tratto per Donizetti un libretto proprio l'anno prima, *La romanzesca e l'uomo nero*, di cui sopravvivono oggi i soli passaggi musicati, senza i dialoghi. È quindi possibile che Donizetti sia stato convinto dell'efficacia drammaturgica dell'*Elisir* a partire da precedenti contatti con testi dello scrittore francese.

Asserisce una tradizione dura a morire che Donizetti abbia impiegato appena due settimane per comporre l'*Elisir*: ora, pur con qualche imprestito da opere precedenti – la marcia che accompagna l'ingresso in scena di Belcore è ripresa da *Alahor in Granata* (Palermo, Teatro Carolino, oggi Teatro Bellini, 07/01/1826); il coro d'introduzione del II atto, «Cantiamo, facciam brindisi», è tratto dal coro delle guardie della *Francesca di Foix* (Napoli, Teatro San Carlo, 30/05/1831); altri passaggi sono ancora presi a prestito da *Elisabetta al castello di Kenilworth* e dalla già citata *Romanzesca e l'uomo nero*; e «per inciso, secondo la testimonianza di Emilia Branca Romani, moglie del librettista, il brindisi fu imposto al poeta dal musicista che volle servirsi di un tema precedente [duetto Adina-Dulcamara sulla «Nina gondoliera e il senator Tredenti», impropriamente detta "Barcaruola a due voci", *N.d.A.*], composto per una poesia vernacolare di Carlo Porta tratta dalla *Lettera a la Barborin*:

"Barborin, speranza dora..."»[1] –, sembra più accreditata l'ipotesi che l'autore sia stato contattato con almeno dieci settimane di anticipo sulla data del debutto dall'impresario Alessandro Lanari. Sia come sia, possiamo solo ringraziare che una fortunata serie di combinazioni abbia portato Donizetti a scrivere questo capolavoro.

Al Teatro Municipale di Piacenza, come si diceva, *L'elisir d'amore* ha aperto la stagione 2014/2015, andando in scena sabato 11 e domenica 12 ottobre 2014 con un valore aggiunto: quello di essere stato scelto per il «Progetto Opera Laboratorio 2014». È, questa, un'iniziativa della Fondazione Teatri di Piacenza volto a dare a giovani cantanti la possibilità di interpretare un'opera sotto la supervisione di un maestro, il celebre baritono Leo Nucci, in grado di guidarli e seguirli lungo le varie fasi dell'allestimento, maturando con lui un'esperienza formativa unica nel loro *curriculum*: «Il progetto, infatti, prevede lo studio dello spartito, della drammaturgia musicale, dell'interpretazione musicale e delle tecniche di dizione, pronuncia ed espressione mediante la "parola scenica"»[2].

Leo Nucci è per l'occasione anche regista (in collaborazione con Salvo Piro); e, a giudicare dall'esito, c'è da augurarsi che prenda più spesso in mano le redini di una regia teatrale! Siamo di fronte ad un trattamento registico modernista, ma non iconoclasta, il tipo di regia cui dovrebbero guardare molti registi che, invece, soffrendo forse di un complesso di inferiorità, non mancano di rovinare la fruizione (e il piacere) delle opere più belle per introdurre dettagli inesistenti o stravolgere l'impianto originale al solo fine di emergere e di farsi notare: più che la frequentazione di teatri e palcoscenici, si consiglia loro quella di uno psicologo. L'aderenza al libretto di Romani è quanto mai soddisfacente, a partire dall'insegna dell'osteria "La Pernice", citata in una battuta di Dulcamara, così come le azioni dei personaggi e i loro atteggiamenti, credibili e coerenti con la vicenda. Unico grande cambiamento rispetto all'originale, la trasposizione dell'intera opera nella campagna italiana degli anni Cinquanta, trasposizione che però non snatura né altera il contenuto ed il messaggio dell'opera. Il contesto diventa esplicito quando, osservando la scenografia (a cura di Carlo Centolavigna), si nota la locandina di *Pane, amore e fantasia* (del 1953) su una parete dell'osteria e si dà un'occhiata ai costumi dei personaggi (di Artemio Cabassi): scopriamo così una Adina in abito blu a *pois* bianchi, rossi e grigi, un Nemorino che pare preso a prestito dal *Quarto stato* di Pellizza da Volpedo, una Giannetta a piedi nudi e un Belcore vestito da carabiniere ricalcati sul modello della Bersagliera e del maresciallo Carotenuto (Gina Lollobrigida e Vittorio De Sica nel film). Quanto a Dulcamara, è un caleidoscopio di colori, con una giacca a scacchi bianca e nera e un cilindro di feltro verde (in coordinato coi calzini,

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[1] cfr. Emilia Branca Romani, *Felice Romani ed i più riputati maestri di musica del suo tempo: cenni biografici ed aneddotici*, Torino, Lœscher, 1882, citata in *Dalla Francia all'Italia e ritorno. Percorsi di un libretto d'opera* di Rita Verderame, XIV Congresso Nazionale Associazione Italianisti, Genova, 15-18 settembre 2010.

[2] Federica Pighi, dal Comunicato Stampa.

che nel II atto diventano rossi!), rappresentazione vivida del personaggio tutta apparenza che non rinuncia al *kitsch* pur di abbagliare e abbindolare la gente.

Al colore delle scenografie hanno contribuito inoltre l'asinella Aurora (comparsa anche nella *Carmen* e nei *Pagliacci* con regia di Zeffirelli) e una pappagalla, Livia, di 4 anni; e se Aurora era deputata a trainare il carretto di Dulcamara, Livia non ha mai abbandonato la spalla del suo padrone, Vito Salvia, di professione addestratore di animali (che ha fornito, per esempio, anche i cavalli alle recite dell'*Aida* all'arena di Verona): incontrato durante l'intervallo, ci ha rivelato infatti che il pappagallo è un animale molto possessivo, che considera sua proprietà esclusiva l'umano che lo alleva.

Intervistati dopo la recita, i cantanti della prima compagnia si sono rivelati freschi e spontanei come lo erano sulla scena; l'età media era di ventitré anni, e per quasi tutti si trattava del primo incontro col compositore orobico. Giovani, sì, ma non inesperti. Maria Mudryak, *alias* Adina, è un promettente soprano kazako che si è distinta per una voce particolarmente vibrata, che corre lungo il teatro, e che sarebbe interessante ascoltare in ruoli più drammatici. Prima di rivederla nei panni di Adina, a febbraio-marzo 2015 sulla piazza di Ravenna, avrà modo di interpretare Giulietta nei *Contes d'Hoffmann* al Teatro Amilcare Ponchielli di Cremona. Nemorino, il tenore Marco Ciaponi, tende invece a trattenersi, forse per l'età, forse per non strafare, o per conservarsi in vista della *Furtiva lagrima*, che gli riesce pulita e precisa, forse un po' sbiadita nel timbro. Ribaldo e virile invece il Belcore di Francesco Salvadori, dal timbro profondo e dal volume massiccio, perfetto nelle parti in cui la sicumera del personaggio si trincera dietro la divisa. Giannetta (Ludovica Gasparri) e Dulcamara (Daniel Giulianini) sono comuni alle due compagnie di canto. La prima è un soprano meno spinto della Mudryak, ma compensa con una voce graziosa ed una mimica estremamente espressiva. «La difficoltà principale di Giannetta non è tanto nella parte vocale, quanto nel fatto che deve riuscire a sostenere gli altri personaggi quasi esclusivamente con la gestualità – ci spiega Ludovica in una breve intervista, senza più parrucca riccia – per questo Leo Nucci durante le prove mi ha detto: "Quando sei in scena, muoviti, passa da un personaggio all'altro, coinvolgi il coro, interagisci coi comprimari"»: indicazioni più che rispettate da parte di una Giannetta che, a fine opera, si allontana sul *mosquito* del bel maresciallo. Il secondo si presenta come un basso buffo che potrebbe osare anche ruoli seri. Il volume vocale è ottimo, il timbro sul chiaro e la sillabazione nelle sequenze "parlanti" veloce, staccata, ma ben comprensibile. Da un punto di vista attoriale, sono riuscitissime soprattutto le scene in cui Dulcamara si mostra piccato da parte delle reazioni del popolo, come durante il duetto della «barcaruola»; grazie a queste e ad altre scene, Giulianini si mostra come il vero mattatore della serata, strappando più di un applauso al pubblico, forse anche più bendisposto del solito (come si può non essere bendisposti verso un personaggio così ben delineato e trascinante come il dottor Dulcamara?) grazie al variopinto costume e all'ancor più variopinta Livia!

Meno istrionico, forse, ma tecnicamente più equilibrato il terzetto della seconda compagnia. Si parte con la Adina di Giuliana Gianfaldoni, dal volume vocale inferiore rispetto a quello di Maria Mudryak, ma convincente nel controllo del suo strumento. Più costante l'emissione di Francesco Castoro, che nell'interpretare Nemorino delinea con maggiore evidenza le diverse sfumature del personaggio (Ciaponi tendeva a stancarsi durante le sequenze più lunghe, al contrario di Castoro che invece sostiene la parte in modo più uniforme). Discorso simile per Andrea Vincenzo Bonsignore, nei panni di Belcore, che, pur avendo una voce più corta, riesce nondimeno a tenere il ruolo con saldezza, sebbene più scolasticamente rispetto a Salvadori, peccando a tratti di una certa innaturalezza nei movimenti di scena.

Stefano Ranzani ha guidato sapientemente l'Orchestra Giovanile Luigi Cherubini, imprimendo dapprima un passo forse un po' troppo spedito durante il Preludio iniziale, ma adeguandosi ben presto ad una velocità conforme alla tradizione. Grazie alla sua direzione e alle dimensioni contenute dell'orchestra, poi, il volume strumentale non ha prevaricato mai sulle voci, dato molto positivo che ha consentito ai cantanti di esibirsi al meglio, facendoli sentire visibilmente a loro agio. Plauso infine al Coro del Teatro Municipale di Piacenza, splendidamente amalgamato e diretto da Corrado Casati.

Christian Speranza

Luncheon Get-together

We are holding another Donizetti Society lunch on Saturday 14th 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 £8 to £10, (desserts, wine and service are extra), with meat, fish and vegetarian options on offer. They also have an extensive à la carte menu. Members outside London thinking about a short break in the capital might like to consider the English Touring Opera performance of *Il furioso* at the Hackney Empire on March 12th and our lunch on the Saturday! In any case, do join us if you can.

Please let Alan Jackson know by 8th 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).