DYNAMIC

March 2017 Newsletter

OLIVO E PASQUALE

GAETANO DONIZETTI
Federico Maria Sardelli
Ugo Giacomazzi and Luigi Di Gangi
Teatro Sociale di Bergamo

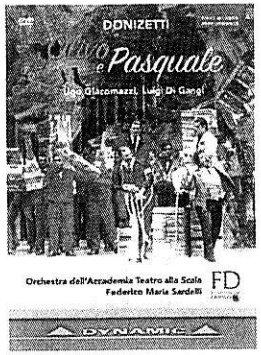
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Two rare cantatas:
Donizetti revivals in Palermo
6 March 2017

First spotted by transatlantic eyes, discussed in this Newsletter some five years ago, two elusive Donizetti cantatas graced the stage at the Teatro Massimo this Spring in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Conservatorio of that splendid city. Both were composed during Donizetti's traumatic stay in 1825 as Maestro di Cappella at the Teatro Carolino (named for the wife of Ferdinando I (and IV), Maria Carolina of Austria - sister of the ill-fated Marie Antoinette).

> **Emerging from unwilling obscurity on 8 May this year in the depths of the Conservatorio Library in Palermo, are the manuscripts of two "lost" cantatas by Donizetti both described as "composed in the summer of 1825" the first of them a "*Cantata per il natalizio di Re Ferdinando I*" [a title surely open to question as Ferdinando I died on 4 January 1825 and it may in fact be the *Cantata per il compleanno di Francesco I re di Napoli* listed by Inzaghi as "*Perdute*" (IN.249) - the second a *Cantata per la partenze del Lugotenente Generale Marchese Ugo delle Favare* which appears to have evaded Inzaghi but both of these cantate are itemised personally by Gaetano himself (Ashbrook p36 items 4 & 5 where the first of them is described as *Cantata per la Nascita del Re di Napoli Francesco primo. In Palermo*).**
>
> Newsletter 116 (June 2012)

Thanks to this gala opening we can add a bit more substance to the above. Blessed by a *telegramma di saluto* by the President of the Republic, witnessed by the famous Sindaco and by some of the modern heirs of the Marchese delle Favare, we are told that the composer...

" in quel period scrisse due bellissime cantate encomiastiche, la prima per il marchese Ugo delle Favare, luogotenente del re, e la seconda proprio per il compleanno di Francesco I, re delle due Sicilie. Poi Donizetti lasciò Palermo e fu proprio Ugo delle Favare, avveduto e colto a destinare i manoscritti autografi alla biblioteca del Conservatorio, così come salvò l'Annunziata di Antonello da Messina, portandola da una sacrestia al museo Abatellis. Solo nel 2012 Dario Lo Cicero, responsabile della biblioteca, li ritrova e ieri sera sono stati eseguiti con enorme successo e con qualche commozione. In sala anche alcuni degli eredi del lungimirante marchese delle Favare... Telegramma di saluto del Presidente della

Repubblica Sergio Mattarella, Il concerto si è aperto con l'ouverture della Norma di Bellini, e di seguito le due cantate, una sorta di inno borbonico, tanto quanto un inno alla Sicilia e alla sua grandezza, uno squarcio di storia allietato da un'armonia nostalgica e struggente..."

Newsletter 118 (February 2013) had offered some contemporary precision:

> **Our friend Mario Villani has kindly confirmed both the date and the place of the first performance of the cantata by Donizetti [See Newsletter 116 p26] *'Cantata per la partenza del Lugotenente Generale Marchese Ugo delle Favare'* the manuscript of which was recently discovered in the Conservatorio Library at Palermo. The necessary information is contained in an issue of *Teatri Arti e Letteratura* then called 'Cenni Storici intorno alle Lettere Invenzioni Arti Commercio e Spettacoli Teatrali' and printed in Bologna. Parte Terza - n° 69 - Giovedi 18 agosto 1825, page 175 reads:**
>
> PALERMO TEATRO CAROLINO
>
> LI 25 Luglio
>
> Prima che S.E. il Luogotenente Generale si fosse imbarcato per recarsi a Napoli, si trattenne al teatro di musica sino alle ore quattro d'Italia. In quella sera la rappresentazione solita fu preceduta da una Licenza appositamente scritta per la circostanza, ed in poche ore posta in musica dal maestro Donizzetti. Questo estemporaneo lavoro dal pubblico applaudito, ci ha dato il primo saggio de' suoi talenti e ci ha fatto conoscere in lui un professore colmo di genio, di estro, e di vivacità.
>
> I tre attori che hanno avuto parte in quella Cantata, cioè la signora Ferron, ed i signori Winter, e Tamburini hanno concorso a renderla più gradita, abbenchè fosse mancato loro il tempo di poterla animare con un libero atteggiamento, tuttavia il signor Winter che ha dovuto agire sinora in opere buffe, ha fatto in questo incontro conoscere quanto meglio debba valere nelle interpretazioni serie, e per la forza della sua chiara voce, e per lo spirito che dà all'azione; come altresì il signor Tamburini ha mostrato di avere tanta dignità nelle parti gravi, quanta grazia ha sviluppata sinora nelle piacevoli, che ha sostenute.

Thanks to the current initiative we can now supply another detail or two:

"Se oggi sono giunte fino a noi, il merito è proprio del luogotenente Ugo delle Favare, che dispose che tutti gli spartiti di musica del Carolino afferissero al Conservatorio. Gli autori – o l'autore – dei testi sono ancora sconosciuti, ma il loro carattere encomiastico si avvale di alcune intuizioni originali. Fra queste, la presenza di tre emblematici personaggi della seconda cantata: il Genio greco, il Genio romano e il Genio normanno, chiaro riferimento al mitico legame di Palermo con il suo genius loci. La revisione è a cura di Vito Mandina."

What we cannot add - at this moment - is any news of a prospective recording or of the availability of the material for performance elsewhere.

AW

Who or what was Méhul?

Report of a concert at St John's Smith Square, 10th February 2016
Michael Spyres and John Irvin, tenors
Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
conducted by Jonathan Cohen

Douglas M. Bennett

Before reporting on the actual event, I should like to take a diversion on the subject of the use of "Marketing" to bring a large audience in to concerts. The proposition that all publicity is good publicity may not apply to the 'Arts'. The marketing hype that nowadays precedes any concert with something mildly unusual on its programme is in danger of having the opposite effect if it makes any untenable claim. The actual title given to this concert was 'Méhul: the First Romantic'. There are some problems with that proposition, to say the least. If it had been offered as a question I would have had no problem, but to suggest that everything before Méhul was 'Un-Romantic', or to imply he was the greatest 'Romantic' composer is to strain credulity too far.

Luckily I was not put off, and to judge by the size of the audience, neither were many others. But were we all there for the right reason?

Let us try to approach the problem from another angle, because the concert was not limited to the works of Méhul alone. Instead there had been an attempt to 'set him in context', which added a further layer of obfuscation for those trying to get to grips with the broader subject. It was probably just as well that for the majority of audience members that did not seem to be the objective of their evening's entertainment.

Here is the playlist in order of performance, with dates of origin:

Méhul: Overture, Les Amazones (1811)
Méhul: Du mal affreux, Mélidore et Phrosine (1794)
Glück: Air de Furie, Orfée et Eurydice (1774)
Méhul: Quoi! Je cherche en vain, Uthal (1806)
Méhul: First movement, Symphony 5 (unfinished) (1810)
Beethoven: Gott! Welch dunkel hier!, Fidelio (1814)
Mozart: Overture, Les Petits Riens (1778)
Méhul: Traçons bien notre plan, Une Folie (1802)
Kreutzer: Overture, Astyanax (1801)
Méhul: Qu'ai-je fait malheureux?, Euphrosine (1790/95)
Salieri: Overture, Les Danaïdes (1784)
Méhul: O Dieux écoutez ma prière, Ariodant (1799)
bis, Méhul: Amour, si je succombe, Ariodant (1799)

A strange mixture: the Kreutzer is the French Rodolphe, not Conradin. Two French, three German and one Italian: that mix risks that any assessment will be biased towards a world in which the term 'Romantic' is considered interchangeable with that of 'Stürm und Drang'.
Putting the items in date order produces only a slightly clearer rationale:

Glück: Air de Furie, Orfée et Eurydice (1774)
Mozart: Overture, Les Petits Riens (1778)
Salieri: Overture, Les Danaïdes (1784)
Méhul: Qu'ai-je fait malheureux?, Euphrosine (1790/95)
Méhul: Du mal affreux, Mélidore et Phrosine (1794)
Méhul: Amour, si je succombe, Ariodant (1799)
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Kreutzer: Overture, Astyanax (1801)
Méhul: Traçons bien notre plan, Une Folie (1802)
Méhul: Quoi! Je cherche en vain, Uthal (1806)
Méhul: First movement, Symphony 5 (unfinished) (1810)
Méhul: Overture, Les Amazones (1811)
Beethoven: Gott! Welch dunkel hier!, Fidelio (1814)

That looks like an exposition representing the German 'Classical' tradition (Salieri being the natural heir to Glück in Vienna), followed by a theme development centred on Méhul (punctuated by the Kreutzer overture to show Méhul's influence spreading in Paris). No recapitulation, but a coda from the sole opera of perhaps the greatest early romantic: Beethoven.
But before putting a cadence to this 'symphony' and a triumphant QED, I protest. The trio of pre-Méhul pieces is odd. The Glück and Salieri I understand, but Mozart's Les Petits Riens? That ballet has an unusual genesis. There are questions of authenticity over the surviving score. The overture is usually accepted as pure Mozart, and certainly his artistry is evident in its clever sonata structure, achieved with only the faintest of hints of keys other than the tonic C. But it carries not the slightest hint of the romanticism evident elsewhere in Mozart's music. What if the Don Giovanni overture had been inserted in the programme instead? Might not the wildness of Méhul become swamped in Viennese schlagobers, preceded and followed by savoury morsels of Glück and Beethoven?

But enough of a preamble; now to the concert itself, and the first thing to mention is the tuning pitch of 430 Hz rather than the modern standard of 440 Hz. On BBC Radio 3 the evening before Michael Spyres had sung 3 excerpts by Méhul with piano to promote the concert. I don't have perfect pitch, but to me the version with piano made a more familiar sound. But that is not why I mention this. The significance is that both singers had to learn their parts in two 'voice settings': a huge commitment for a single concert booking. I can only hope they received a just reward.

The opening item proved promising enough: Les Amazones may not have been a great success for Méhul, but the subject is as colourful as any by Rameau and the overture (which does not suffer from the weak livret that ruined the opera) came over as robust. The fact that the opera's failure drove Méhul to give up composition and devote himself to gardening (pace Voltaire's Candide) made it a strange choice. Romanticism denied?
Launching the vocal part of the concert with a piece from the revolutionary period (Mélidore et Phrosine) may also have been a misjudgement. Critics at the time were divided: some loved it and others found it lacked fervour. Such are the perils of censorship in times of change, which can result in drama being neutered. Tenor John Irvin gave us all the notes, but the result was curiously lifeless.

After some Glück (stunning as usual) and some more Méhul (an excerpt from Uthal, which is more famous for its violin-less orchestra than its musical charms, followed by the remains of the incomplete 5th Symphony) the audience welcomed the appearance of Michael Spyres. He was greeted in a 'See the conquering hero come....' manner, which rather shows the main attraction for the large audience.
The palpable eagerness in the hall was rewarded with a heroic blast by Spyres: Beethoven's Gott! Welch dunkel hier! from Fidelio. At last we were in the world of an undisputed romantic.

The second half added little to the argument. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment proudly declaim on all its publicity that 'NOT all Orchestras are the Same' (my emphasis). There is, however a corollary that can also prove true: 'Each Orchestra may SOUND the Same'! In this case it would have been better if it had not been true, because Jonathan Cohen drew from the band a broadly equal approach to all items. So Mozart's echt-Classical and Kreutzer's finta-Romantic overtures lived in the same (very effective) sound world. That alone was enough to obliterate any claim to Méhul's novelty.
It was only the coincidence of two items from Méhul's Ariodant that made me wonder if what we were missing was a chance to assess Méhul's ability to successfully articulate a whole operatic drama. Then I remembered: we have available to us good recordings of Stratonice and L'Irato. An older recording of Joseph sometimes turns up, and a new recording of Uthal has just been issued with superb documentation. Surely that is enough to assess him as an opera composer? If so, then the conclusion has been unfavourable. No modern opera house has chosen to stage any of these (or others by Méhul to my knowledge).
I fear that the arbitrary interference of revolution-obsessed censors seems to have done for the chances of the loyal and flexible Méhul earning the respect of subsequent generations. Even after Napoléon had elevated himself to faux-potentate, his artistic judgement, like his political skill, did not sustain a long term dynastic reign, or a strong artistic legacy.

That brings me back to the source of the quotation from which the title of this concert was drawn. It turns out to be the opinion of a revolutionary critic, attributed to the Marquis de Condorcet no less. It was he who used the term *Romantic* in *La chronique de Paris* on 1 April 1793 when describing the music of Méhul's *Le jeune sage et le vieux fou.* Note the date! Might this have been intended as an April Fool? The first quoted instance of such practises comes in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, but it has no subsequent history in France to my knowledge.
But I like the idea that this might be yet another of those cases where history has been led wildly astray by some ardent academic taking a joke too seriously, and leading a whole army of subsequent students into error.
There is nothing wrong with Méhul's music that simple enjoyment of what it IS, rather than what it might be, would put right. To judge from the applause, that seemed to be the audience's conclusion on 10th February, and should encourage many more of us to seek out his music.



LA

REINE DE CHYPRE

OPÉRA EN CINQ ACTES

PAROLES DE

M. DE SAINT-GEORGES

MUSIQUE DE

F. HALÉVY

DE L'INSTITUT

PARTITION, PIANO ET CHANT

RÉDUITE PAR R. WAGNER

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PARIS

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Cornaro x 2

Alexander Weatherson

"I didn't think it so much worse than all the others"
(*"non la supponeva tanto al disotto delle altre mie"*)
Donizetti to Dolci 6 February 1844

She had been a blow to his self-esteem. Intended for Vienna but then shelved half-complete, her creative fervour dispersed, the belated staging of *Caterina Cornaro* in the Parthenopean capital in circumstances beyond his control proved his undoing, he was ill, he blamed himself, it was *his* fault he said but the bass pedal in the dismissal of this opera was no fault of the composer, it was that of fate. Donizetti gave birth to his operas himself, under his own baton, but weakening health forbade any journey to Naples to ensure a happy delivery.

Conceived in the shadows, in a state of exhaustion, his letters full of "*if I don't die*" and "*nothing fills the gap*" (ironically confirming *Caterina's* insemination between *Linda di Chamounix* and *Don Pasquale* as the jeering critics noted) this ill-received opera owed nothing either to their limited understanding or to these two landmarks.

How much did it owe to Halévy? The French composer's *La Reine de Chypre,* a five-act *grand-opéra* with a Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint Georges text had enthralled Paris a few months before. It featured just those starring voices he believed to be his own property - La Stoltz, Duprez and Barroilhet as well as the same plot and historical heft, but initiated in its echo, while Halévy's imposing score still reverberated, real similarities between the two operas are surprisingly few. Gallic accents from the French tour-de-force make a mark only to the extent that this saga of thwarted love and murky Venetian intrigue divides into two parts: begun in Paris Donizetti's inaugural gambit flirts briefly with Halévy's expansive *sceneggiatura* - while the dramatic core of his fervent response to the plot, fruit of his return to polyglot Austria, has an orchestral width, travelogue curiosity and a range of exotic images that belongs to another culture. *Linda* and *Pasquale* have no role here, eastern spice from the Maghrebin *Dom Sébastien roi de Portugal* has been stirred into the mixture.

Comparisons are delusional, dreams of a fraternal clone are illusory, the same encounters prompt a similar response in both scores, but hopes of a print-through are unavailing. With one foot in two European capitals and with *grand-opéras* of his own Donizetti derived at least half of his opera from a default recipe in his own portfolio.

Parallel moments are scarcely more than a handful:

1. The *Acte I duo* between Caterina and Gérard of *La Reine de Chypre*: *Le ciel est radieux/Gérard mon Gérard* can be paired with the *duettino* of the same amorous couple in an identical position in the Prologue of *Caterina Cornaro*: *Tu l'amor mio, tu l'iride*
2. The ensuing intervention of Mocenigo can also be equated: ie *Sommes nous seuls ici* - a *duo-scène* in *La Reine de Chypre* between Andréa Cornaro and Mocenigo is dramatically paralleled with the *scena e cavatina*: *Dell'empio Cipro il popolo* of Mocenigo in *Caterina Cornaro*
3. The *duo final* of *Acte 2* by Halévy is echoed precisely by the *scena e duetto finale* of the identical pair that ends the Donizetti Prologue: that is: *Arbitre de ma vie* by Halévy has its equivalent in *Spera in me, della tua vita* of its Italian sport
4. Similarly, the *récitatif et duo final* of Halévy's *Acte 3* between Gérard and Lusignan *Vous qui de la chevalerie* has its parallel in the *scena e duetto* of the same two male voices that forms the crux of Atto primo of *Caterina Cornaro*: *Guarda o re, dagli occhi miei*
5. Lusignan's *cavatine* in *Acte 5* of *La Reine de Chypre* is echoed by the *scena e romanza* of Lusignano in Atto primo of Donizetti's opera: that is Lusignan's *A ton noble courage,* of the first finds a pair in *Non turbarti a questi accenti* of the second
6. ... and then very surprisingly where dramatic sequence is concerned the emotional crux, the *duo* between Gérard and Caterina - the actual *point-de-repère* of *Acte 5* of the *grand opéra* of Halévy *Quand le devoir sacré qui près du roi m'appelle,* has a precise corollary with the Atto primo *scena e duetto* between Gerardo and Caterina - that is in Donizetti's *Da quel di che lacerato*

Factually, as can be seen, the last duet of the generously expansive opera by Halévy - the proactive emotional climax of *La Reine de Chypre* finds the Italian composer still in his sprawling and rather discontinuous first act, and it marks a term, with these gallic moments Halévy more-or-less vanishes, his *Acte 4* is ignored and his *Acte 5* is dismembered, though many aspects of the plot remain *in situ* his prolific contemporary offers an Atto Secondo to his own taste, its substance *meridional* in tooth and claw. Once in fact, Donizetti returned to his imperial sinecure and the opera's destiny was assured he brought the plot to an energetic resolution: initiated by a big moment for the tenor, followed by a front-of-stage *gran'scena* for the heroine - a bipartite aria launched by the coro, centred upon a *preghiera* interrupted

by a lachrymose off-stage death-scene for the baritone in the form of *tempo-di-mezzo,* the whole capped by a syncopated cabaletta-con-coro with a cry of farewell (from Gerardo) and full reprise. In all an eloquent, if far-from novel sequence with the intention of bringing down the curtain to the eager endorsement of his fellow citizens.



Jacques-Fromental Halévy

These operas of Halévy and Donizetti, as is clear, were born of opposing philosophies as well as venues. Audiences in the grandiose Opéra were blasé, could be charmed and diverted but prided themselves on a jealously preserved *désinvolture*, occasions when they were actually conquered were few. *Grand opéra* was devised for their sanguine disposition, it offered elevated themes with a leisurely unfolding in meticulously re-created historical settings with picture-book veracity and costumes, hyper-real *voire* gruesome or disturbing spectacle as a major forte, a ballet *divertissement* as light relief and a thin spread of judiciously distributed vocal items. Intemperate enthusiasm was reserved for lesser venues.

In utter contrast, audiences at the superb Real Teatro di S. Carlo of Naples took their seats with feigned indifference, showing little attention to the stage, but when engaged musically proceeded to respond to the anticipated supernatural vocal athletics with a violence that was proverbial.

This last heady brew ultimately shaped the Donizettian approach to his doomed *tragedia lirica*, converting it from the measured psycho-historical colonial drama of its gestation to a travel-poster melodrama replete with that which Italian eyes and ears wanted to see and hear.

Grand opéra never quite equated with the Latin notion of *entertainment.*

Staged on 18 January 1844 *Caterina Cornaro* suffered from faulty genesis. Its evolution can be traced from Donizetti's letters: conceived as an offering to the complex Austro-Hungarian political psyche her libretto was commissioned in the summer of 1842 but then was rudely upstaged by an opera on much the same argument by Franz Lachner - an unwelcome setback that defused most of her initial motivation. We hear of the project again in that same capital many months later, when, on 21 March 1843, he unexpectedly announced that the shelved "*Catterina*" would find refuge in Naples.[1] At the end of May he informs his publisher that her "*second and third acts*" [2] (he means her first and second acts) have already been sent to Naples and that "*the first act*" (he means the Prologue) will follow when some adjustments to it's music have been made.[3] On 7 June he writes to his friend Tommaso Persico in Naples to say that he has now sent the revised Prologue and libretto to Naples and asks that he gives a hand with the preparation ("*Vedi di aggiustarmi codesto affari*") as the whole business is giving him "*stomach ache and he wants to live in peace*". It is clear that painful birth pangs led to something not so very different from real dyspepsia.

Letters from the middle to the end of June are alive with complaints about the projected cast and enforced alterations to the music; these being most especially to the *Scena e Romanza* of Lusignano in Act 1 (Lusignano being the character nearest to his heart - it is not impossible that the fatally-ill Donizetti compared himself with this lovelorn hero!) accompanied by fears for the opera's reception with a number of disturbing key issues: he insists that Gerardo *must* wear a *Maltese Cross* when his vocation as a Knight of Rhodes is revealed (he makes a little drawing) and *not* a crucifix which would be vetoed fatally (to the plot) by the censorship in Naples, he hopes too that the King can be persuaded to desist from applying his personal ukase to the *poisoning* of his confrère, the ill-used King of Cyprus. He should be reminded that it was the work of a vile *republican*!

[1] Donizetti had proposed to write an opera for Naples based on 'Ruy Blas'; Cammarano prepared a synopsis purportedly derived from a play called 'Folco Melian' which he believed could evade the virtual ban on Victor Hugo's works in that city, but the composer - though he began sketching its score - had second-thoughts and in view of the ill-effect of his covert departure from Naples decided to replace his subversive project with the less-contentious *Caterina Cornaro*

[2] The composer's autograph score in Naples is inconclusively divided. The "*Prologue and Two Acts*" of its stage appearance being a later clarification, but one which coincidentally underlines its divided genesis between Paris and Vienna

[3] The autograph score of the "*Prologue*" indeed shows signs of revision

Even as late as November of that year he continued to agonise over the "*operazioni chirurgiche*" (cuts and amputations) that he dreads will be imposed upon his "*Catterina*". He had every reason to do so. At the prima the opera was thoroughly betrayed. The Venetian coro behaved throughout in a way have would have been praised by Gilbert and Sullivan; Gerardo's unmanning oath of affiliation as a Knight of Rhodes was ignored - together with his Maltese Cross - thus deftly removing any reason for his behavior at the height of the drama as well as any rationale for the key duet *Da quel di che lacerato*; as for the royal hero Lusignano, he was portrayed as near-moribund from his first entry to the bewilderment of an audience that was not allowed to know that his enfeebled behaviour was due to the actions of a sinister incubus faithful to the Republic of Venice. The King of Naples had failed Donizetti.

Then there were the *foreign-sounding* orchestral demands learned in Vienna which Neapolitan audiences heard with impatience. *Caterina Cornaro* demanded a very large orchestra with a huge wind section whose soloistic flights impinged upon even the very best voices - an "*alien*" lyricism at many important moments according to the critics which interrupted the enjoyment of the local vocal connoisseurs.

The opera fell apart even before the end of Act One: three pieces only were applauded, Caterina's *cabaletta* in the Prologue; the *stretta* of her duet with Gerardo in Atto Primo; and the first part of the quartet that closed this same act (with its slight concurrence with the quartet that ends Acte 5 of Halevy's opera). The entire Act Two, the climax of the romantic tragedy, all the music that had been written specifically for their delectation fell prey to the whistling, heckling and relentless hostility which was the fate of operas that failed to please in that city.

It was the ultimate envoi that capped the whole disaster. Caterina's final cabaletta left Donizetti's erstwhile supporters defeated in their seats. They had waited in vain, the city was accustomed to long long *arie finali* when the belcantist *aficionado* could sit back transfixed in a haze of lyrical fervour at the final apotheosis of a celebrity voice. Within the memory of such indulgent closures as those of *Sancia di Castiglia*, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Roberto Devereux* on that stage, confronted by the elegantly modest syncopated understatement of the widowed "*Catterina*" the audience took noisy revenge. Not only was the dowager sovereign short-winded but they too had been cut off in their prime. A hostile press turned the screw, suggesting that *Caterina Cornaro* had been written by someone else, leaving the composer in Vienna incandescent with rage.

*

It was not the end of *Caterina Cornaro*. More was to come. There was a survival potential to this plot whose prospects and fate were so oddly spliced. It remained a challenge even though a fractured structure militated against success, or simply because it militated against success.

Upon the news of the failure of his opera Donizetti began convalescent measures to add and subtract new pieces, to add a *cabaletta da forza all'entrata del Rè* and a *duetto fra Catterina e Lusignano* at the start of the second act that would permit the king to die *"with her name of his lips"*. A project too to eliminate Gerardo in the *finale ultimo* in a major rethink of the unhappy *cabaletta*. These things did not actually reach the stage. At the one revival of *Caterina Cornaro* in his lifetime at the Teatro Ducale of Parma in February 1845 there were some changes as indicated in the printed libretto but not those listed above. Caterina had a new *cabaletta* in the place of that in the Prologue (though it was one of the few pieces to have been applauded earlier) Mocenigo too has a new aria and Lusignano an amendment to his *Romanza*. But there is no evidence that a radical *finale nuovo* of any kind was *performed* as is sometimes claimed.

No doubt it was due to the quality of the cast he was offered at Parma whose reputation he was obliged to endorse, it is unthinkable (at this date) that a renowned diva like Marianna Barbieri-Nini in the role of a sovereign *Caterina Cornaro* would have been ready to accept the climax to an opera in which she must quit the scene without the last word.

Whatever its *convenienze*, at least the revival won the day and Donizetti could abandon his heroine, if not with satisfaction at least with relief.

*

Few critical judgments have done justice to *Caterina Cornaro*. In any historical context this was an opera open to the future. Though the unkind global economy of our day will remark on her flawed *business model* and even though caught between two cultures like her incautious fellow traveler the King of Portugal, she set sail on a voyage of discovery the composer himself was not to complete. For him, as for both these celebrities, time ran out.

In no way can this opera be described as "*worse than all the others*". It is true that piecemeal genesis left unrewarding gaps but thanks to

Parisian culture, to *grand-opéra* in general (and by inference to Halévy) a species of mid-century descriptive writing had rubbed-off on Donizetti and it was his scene-painting, expansive cori, wide-screen vistas and evocative instrumentation, exotic spin-off from the even more extended *Dom Sébastien* that pointed *Caterina Cornaro* in an opposite direction to the Neapolitan bathos that had been her undoing. This opera, with its string of arias, tableaux and ensembles in no-way unworthy of any of his major scores marks another small step in the long march towards the Victorian world-view, that global intellectual explosion soon to make a momentous impact at the hands of artists and writers, industrialists and innovators of the mid-century. Donizetti was joining the throng. Not on any large canvas of course with this scribbled postcard from Cyprus, but the scale is not really relevant, the picture is an important one.



DIONILLA SANTOLINI – DIVA INATTUALE

di Gabriele Cesaretti

Oltre ai grandi cantanti che hanno fatto la storia dell'opera sono esistiti, e sempre esisteranno, artisti che, per svariati motivi (non necessariamente e non sempre legati a una presunta mancanza di talento) si sono trovati ai margini, mancando di quella fama imperitura in grado di consegnarli alla storia per essere invece oggetto solo dell'interesse degli addetti ai lavori. È il caso di Dionilla Santolini, contralto maceratese che, a leggere la breve nota biografica curata dallo storico Giovanni Spadoni per il suo *Dizionario dei musicisti marchigiani*[1], sembra essere solo una delle tante artiste di carriera sostanzialmente secondaria operanti nel convulso e disordinato mondo dell'opera del XIX secolo. Di curioso, la Santolini (che fu il primo Garzia nella donizettiana *Sancia di Castiglia* al Teatro San Carlo di Napoli nel 1832 accanto alla Ronzi de Begnis) ha la presenza di due litografie che la ritraggono con dei curiosi quanto finti baffetti con pizzetto: un tratto decisamente poco comune e abbastanza raro, anche se non unico, visto che anche un'altra cantante del XIX secolo, Adelaide Gambaro, dedicataria delle *Dodici melodie preparatorie al canto drammatico con accompagnamento di pianoforte* di Saverio Mercadante (1864), presenta una litografia in cui viene ritratta con tanto di baffi e barba.[2] In entrambi i casi la presenza degli attributi maschili è da ricondurre al costume di scena: le due cantanti furono infatti interpreti celebrate della parte di Maffio Orsini in *Lucrezia Borgia* di Donizetti.

Dionilla Santolini operò tra la fine degli anni '20 del XIX secolo fino almeno al 1858, anno dopo il quale la sua presenza sembra scomparire dalle scene: fu un contralto apprezzatissimo in un'epoca in cui i contralti non godevano più di quel prestigio che, solo fino a pochi anni prima, aveva condotto Rossini a scrivere

1 SPADONI G., *Dizionario dei musicisti marchigiani*, MACERATA, BIBLIOTECA MOZZI BORGETTI, Spa.1226: 164; la nota biografica, basata anche sui documenti di RADICIOTTI G. – SPADONI G. , *Dizionario biobibliografico dei musicisti marchigiani*, MACERATA, BIBLIOTECA MOZZI BORGETTI (i quali riportano anche la fantasiosa leggenda secondo cui Rossini stesso avrebbe predetto una fulgida carriera all'artista maceratese) fornisce le informazioni delle seguenti voci: Dionilla Santolini in SPADONI G,, *Lauro Rossi e l'arte musicale in Macerata dal secolo XVI ad oggi. Estratto del fascicolo speciale pubblicato dal Gruppo degli Studiosi maceratesi per le celebrazioni marchigiane di agosto – settembre 1934*, Macerata, Stabilimento Tipografico A. Affede, 1934, p. 17; Dionilla Santolini in BROCCO V., *Dizionario bibliografico dei maceratesi* in *Storia di Macerata*, Vol. 5, Macerata, Grafica Maceratese, 1993, p. 318; Dionilla Santolini in *Dizionario Storico – Biografico dei Marchigiani*, a cura di CLAUDI G. M. e CATRI L., Ancona – Bologna, Il lavoro editoriale, 1993, p. 184. La Biblioteca Mozzi Borgetti contiene anche gli appunti di Spadoni che si rivelano essere estremamente utili per ricostruire la misteriosa carriera della Santolini: SPADONI G., *14 quaderni di appunti vari*, MACERATA, BIBLIOTECA MOZZI BORGETTI. La figura di Dionilla Santolini è recentemente riemersa grazie alla mostra *Violetta Carmen Mimì – Percorsi al femminile dallo Sferisterio ai Musei Civici di Macerata*, allestita a Palazzo Buonaccorsi di Macerata nell'ambito dell'edizione 2012 del Macerata Opera Festival, cfr. CESARETTI G., *Da Dionilla a Francisca, Storie di cantanti a Macerata tra '800 e '900* in *Violetta Carmen Mimì*, a cura di COLTRINARI F. (Catalogo della Mostra), Macerata, Quodlibet, 2012, pp. 109-124; nel 2013 è stata pubblicata anche una biografia dell'artista: CESARETTI G., *Dionilla Santolini, Diva "inattuale"*, Varese, Zecchini, 2013, cui si rimanda per una ricostruzione più approfondita della carriera della cantante.

2 Adelaide Gambaro era cognata di Mercadante, che aveva sposato la di lei sorella Sofia nel 1832.

alcune tra le pagine più ardite dedicate a questa vocalità. La sua carriera ci permette quindi di osservare alcune mutazioni nel gusto e nella ricezione del pubblico nel trentennio che copre gli anni '30, '40 e '50 del XIX secolo. Dotata di un'estensione ragguardevole, stando almeno alle cronache dell'epoca, Dionilla tentò infatti di proporsi come soprano negli anni '30, con esiti considerati deludenti e conseguente ritiro dalle scene per un anno.

Ascoltando l'unico momento solista di Garzia (l'aria del II Atto "Troppo omai al cor mi preme") nella *Sancia di Castiglia* donizettiana del 1832, poco prima del salto al repertorio sopranile, si può tentare di ricostruire la vocalità dell'artista. La Santolini doveva essere un autentico contralto: la scrittura dell'aria è infatti centrale e sillabica, insistendo nella zona medio-grave della voce, ovvero in quella che doveva evidentemente essere la tessitura migliore per la Santolini; nella successiva cabaletta "Al suo dei grati evviva" appaiono anche eleganti passi di coloratura. Non stupisce, quindi, che le sue prove come soprano abbiano destato perplessità: la prova è nella recensione di un'opera nuova, *Maria di Provenza*, unico titolo nel catalogo dell'oscuro compositore Giuseppe Rustici, in cui la Santolini creò il ruolo del titolo al Teatro della Canobbiana di Milano nella primavera del 1837. Un'anonima critica afferma che la *Maria di Provenza* «benché affatto nuova, pure non sembra scritta espressamente per questi cantanti. Per la Santolini no certamente, perché d'una tessitura al suo registro di voce troppo alta ed incomoda sempre» . L'esperimento sopranile non ebbe dunque seguito e negli anni '40 troviamo la Santolini impegnata in ruoli dalla tessitura medio-grave, a lei più congeniale, tra cui Maffio Orsini nella *Lucrezia Borgia* di Donizetti (che restò uno dei suoi ruoli prediletti), Bianca nel *Giuramento* di Mercadante e Climene nella *Saffo* di Pacini, che testimoniano peraltro i gradimenti del pubblico nella formazione del moderno concetto di repertorio.

Qualche affascinante ipotesi si può anche avanzare circa la doppia litografia in cui Dionilla viene ritratta con baffi e pizzetto; nel clima rovente del Risorgimento, la presenza di barba e baffi costituiva molto più che un vezzo alla moda ma poteva essere letta come una vera dichiarazione politica: i liberali ostentavano barba e baffi (addirittura proibiti da leggi apposite in alcune zone), mentre i filogovernativi, normalmente, erano glabri. Dietro la curiosa scelta di Dionilla di farsi ritrarre per ben due volte col viso simpaticamente deturpato da barba e baffi potrebbero dunque celarsi, oltre al ben motivato orgoglio per l'ottima riuscita del suo Maffio Orsini (che le valse anche una dedica di Gaetano Donizetti "Al bello e bravo Orsino Dionilla Santolini"[3]), anche evidenti simpatie politiche?

Non lo sappiamo con certezza: se la carriera dell'artista maceratese ha potuto essere ricostruita in larga parte grazie alle fonti costituite dalle recensioni e dagli annunci dei giornali dell'epoca molto poco si è riusciti a scoprire sulla vita privata della donna Santolini. Tuttavia almeno un evento andrà citato: nella

3 RADICIOTTI – SPADONI, *Dizionario biobibliografico dei musicisti marchigiani*, cit., c.3641

primavera 1842 Dionilla cantò al Teatro San Ferdinando di Chieti (attuale Teatro Marrucino) accanto al soprano Nunziata Fanti. Durante i mesi di maggio e giugno, in cui era programmata la Stagione di Primavera, sappiamo che l'artista maceratese entrò in contatto con alcuni intellettuali abruzzesi vicini agli ambienti liberali (come ad esempio il religioso Raffaele D'Ortensio o il musicista Giacinto Vito-Colonna), che la elessero come loro diva prediletta: la riprova è nel florilegio di poesie a sfondo risorgimentale che le vennero dedicate, pubblicate sia nelle riviste d'epoca che in libricini[4] appositamente stampati per l'occasione, dati alle stampe in quei mesi a cura dell'intellettuale e musicista chietino Giacinto Vito-Colonna dopo le trionfali recite del *Giuramento*, di *Vestale* e della *Saffo* di cui Dionilla fu protagonista. Tra le poesie si trovano tra l'altro espliciti componimenti del sacerdote di Cepagatti Raffaele D'Ortensio, un mazziniano convinto cui addirittura sarebbe stato vietato di celebrare messa per le sue idee liberali. A contestualizzare meglio il clima di quelle serate chietine ci soccorrono le riviste d'epoca, con relative recensioni, tutte sostanzialmente trionfali nei confronti della Santolini, al punto da scrivere "L'artista che ha superati fino i desideri del Pubblico è stata la sig. Dionilla Santolini prima donna contralto"[5]. Ci fu, però, una significativa eccezione: una recensione pesantemente negativa apparsa in un supplemento a una rivista filogovernativa stampato, si presuppone appositamente, diversi mesi dopo il numero a cui fa riferimento (le recite al San Ferdinando avvennero difatti in primavera); l'articolo non è firmato, ma siglato da un autore anonimo che si firma X.Y.Z. e, leggendolo dopo le lodi di altre riviste, appare evidentemente come una parafrasi volta in negativo delle cronache precedenti: "L'Artista che non ha corrisposto alla pubblica espettazione è la Signora Dionilla Santolini prima donna contralto"[6].

Oltre a tutto questo c'è la curiosa "partecipazione" della Santolini in uno sconosciuto e dimenticato romanzo appartenente alla grande stagione letteraria ottocentesca italiana: *La Tragedia di Senarica* del chietino Giuseppe Mezzanotte (la Senarica del titolo non è altro che la stessa Chieti).

Il romanzo fu pubblicato a Napoli nel 1887, dunque mezzo lustro dopo l'Unità e, comunque, più di quarant'anni dopo la stagione del San Ferdinando cui fa riferimento: all'interno di una riflessione sulla corruzione politica della borghesia italiana postrisorgimentale, con chiaro riferimento al trasformismo di Depretis, c'è spazio anche per il ricordo di una memorabile serata teatrale nei ricordi di gioventù che, sul letto di morte, ha il personaggio di don Pellegrino, trasformista convinto, «funzionante da sindaco o funzionante da giudice regio o da commissario di polizia; e degli atti di giustizia e di clemenza che dimostrava di aver fatto verso i liberali, confondendo, a designare le stesse persone, i termini di giacobini, carbonari e demagoghi, e vantandosi nel tempo stesso di

4 RADICIOTTI – SPADONI, *Dizionario biobibliografico dei musicisti marchigiani*, cit., c.3638 e 3639
5 "Teatri Arti e Letteratura", Anno 20.mo N.953. Tom. 37. Bologna. 19. Maggio 1842, pp.100-101
6 "Il Vigile", Supplemento al Num. 4 (Chieti, 28 febbraio 1842), pp.1-2

essere stato carbonaro e volterriano nel '21»[7]: don Pellegrino racconta delirando un episodio avvenuto al Teatro di Senarica durante una stagione lirica di svariati anni prima in cui la Santolini e il soprano Nunziata Fanti (peraltro criticata nelle riviste che esaltavano la Santolini e invece esaltata in quelle che criticavano la rivale) si dividono i favori del pubblico la prima con il sostegno dei liberali dalla piccionaia e la seconda con quello dei conservatori dai palchi; la rivalità tra le due primedonne sfocia in tafferugli che, nel racconto, conducono addirittura all'arresto della Santolini. Non sono emersi, almeno per il momento, documenti che provino un effettiva presenza della Dionilla Santolini in prigione durante le recite chietine e anche l'esame dei registri di protocollo relativi al periodo della sua permanenza a Chieti ha dato esito negativo da questo punto di vista. Se nel fatto raccontato da Mezzanotte non c'è nulla di vero appare comunque significativo che, quarant'anni dopo quella stagione di primavera al Teatro San Ferdinando, Giuseppe Mezzanotte (peraltro nato nel 1855, quindi tredici anni dopo la stagione in oggetto cui non ebbe modo di assistere) abbia scelto proprio le protagoniste di quelle recite per il ricordo nel delirio di morte del suo antipatico personaggio. Non è una prova, ma si affaccia l'affascinante ipotesi che la stagione primaverile del 1842, e con essa la figura di una Dionilla vicina agli ambienti liberali, doveva essere rimasta famosa e celebrata nei ricordi di chi vi assistette. Se i fatti di Chieti aprono il campo alle ipotesi è invece certo che la Santolini si espose molto nella Venezia della Repubblica di San Marco, creata nel marzo 1848 dai due patrioti Daniele Manin e Niccolò Tommaseo. Con La Fenice chiusa per la complicata e intensa situazione politica in atto Dionilla Santolini venne scelta da Alessandro Betti, responsabile delle stagioni nell'inverno tra il 1848 al 1849 al Teatro Apollo[8], esibendosi non solo in un florilegio di titoli del suo repertorio ma, cosa molto interessante, anche in serate di beneficio «alla patria» con prime esecuzioni di brani politicamente molto esposti.

Questa diva inattuale per vocalità e registro vocale, dunque, fu forse molto attuale per convinzioni politiche: in assenza di ulteriori prove è quindi affascinante immaginare che il "vezzo" di farsi ritrarre (e per ben due volte) con pizzo e baffi fosse non solo, o non tanto, un omaggio alla propria bravura nei ruoli da contralto en travesti, ma una decisa affermazione di ideali patriottici e liberali, come un messaggio in codice destinato a chi sapeva coglierlo.



7 MEZZANOTTE G., *La tragedia di Senarica*, Cappelli Editore, Bologna, 1977, p.48
8 "Teatri Arti e Letteratura", Anno 26.mo N.1277. Tom. 50. Bologna. 14 Dicembre 1848, p. 32

The First Recording of Donizetti

Alan Jackson

When was the first recording of a Donizetti piece made? What was it? And who performed it? Now there's a question for an artistic pub quiz!

The earliest well-known recording is probably that by Enrico Caruso of "Una furtiva lagrima" from *L'elisir d'amore* recorded by Fred Gaisberg for the Gramophone and Typewriter Company (the forerunner of HMV) as part of a now famous series of recordings made on 11th April 1902. Against instructions from head office, Gaisberg agreed to Caruso's exorbitant demand for £100 for ten recordings – it proved a very profitable decision. (This information is from Michael Scott's biography "The Great Caruso. Some other, earlier books, including that by Caruso's wife Dorothy, give the date as March 1902. They also give different dates from Scott for his recordings for the Zonophone and Pathé companies.)

Two other recordings of Donizetti made in 1902 are by Elisa Bruno and Mattia Battistini. The former is of Pierotto's Romanza from *Linda di Chamounix*, reissued on the supplement to HMV's "The Record of Singing" which the liner notes date to March 1902 and was also engineered by Gaisberg in Milan. The Battistini is of the duet "In questo suolo" from *La Favorita* in which he is joined by mezzo Tilde Carotini, one of a series of discs recorded in Warsaw, though I don't know whether or not it pre-dates the Caruso and Bruno discs just mentioned.

In 1901 the 'tenore robusto' Antonio Aramburo made a number of cylinder recordings in Montevideo including "D'un alma troppo fervida" from *Poliuto*, and in the same year Leopoldo Signoretti recorded "Una vergine" from *La Favorita*. Tentatively ascribed to 1900 is a cylinder of "Dans les jardins d'Alcazar ... Léonore viens" from *La Favorite* sung by the much more famous Jean-Baptiste Faure. Also from 1900 is Fanny Toresella singing one verse of "Quando rapita in estasi" together with part of the preceding tempo di mezzo from *Lucia*. (Here I quote the CD liner note, though I think a reading of the first four lines of this cabaletta makes it clear that it is Edgardo who is 'transported in ecstasy' so that the text should be "Quando rapito in estasi". Toresella clearly sings "rapito". The liner notes for the Tetrazzini and Hempel versions mentioned below also have "rapita".) Earlier still, I have an LP reissue of early Bettini cylinders which includes "Tu che a Dio" from *Lucia* sung by Albert Saliza, dating, if the LP label is to be believed, from 1896 – 1898.

But even this is not the answer to my question. Amazingly, the prize goes to Mademoiselle Nikita, who recorded "Quando rapito" on 19th February 1890 (Julian calendar) in St Petersburg accompanied by Pyotr Schurovsky. She was actually American, being born Louisa Margaret Nicholson, probably in Kentucky. She toured the US billed as "The Miniature Patti", studied in Paris with Patti's brother-in-law Maurice Strakosch who helped float the story that she was abducted as an infant by an Indian chief named "Niki"! (Hence the stage name?) In 1889 she made her Russian debut becoming a favourite there.

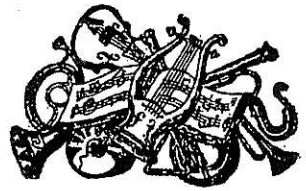
Here her story crosses with that of Julius Block who in 1889 bought one of Thomas Edison's newly invented machines for recording onto cylinders. He took it to Russia where he recorded a great number of cylinders of singers, pianists, actors and other artists, including one of Tchaikovsky and others trying unsuccessfully to persuade Anton Rubinstein to play the piano for the recording horn. They include a number of

musicians for whom there are no other known recordings, including the pianists and composers Taneyev, Arensky and Paul Babst. Miraculously these cylinders survived two world wars and their recent discovery has led to their transfer to CD by Ward Marston where they take up three very well-filled CDs entitled "The Dawn of Recording – The Julius Block Cylinders" issued as Marston 53011-2. I am indebted to Russell Burdekin, the Donizetti Society's webmaster, for lending me the CDs and the liner notes by John Anthony Maltese and Gregor Benko for the above biographical details of Madamoiselle Nikita and my summary of Block's recording project, both much abbreviated here.

Nikita sings both verses, though not the coda, of Lucia's cabaletta. Her second verse is by far the most heavily ornamented I have come across and I have 'old' versions of it by Maria Barrientos, Frieda Hempel, Antonina Nezhdanova and Luisa Tetrazzini, none of whom were reluctant to embellish the music they sang. Curiously the singer who most nearly approaches her is Nezhdanova – a Russian performing tradition perhaps? Again curiously, Nikita actually simplifies some passages in the first verse. To my ears she omits the trill on "estasi" in the first phrase, though she includes a perfectly good one on "core" in the next one. The chromatic scale on "d'accanto" is replaced by a diatonic scale with the strange effect that because she now has only eight semiquavers to sing instead of twelve she arrives at the end of the phrase a beat early and has to insert a compensating beat's rest. In the second verse she perfectly fluently sings the chromatic scale as written. And towards the end of the verse, instead of the first upward semiquaver run from B to B she substitutes a staccato G major arpeggio in quavers from B to B (as does Toresella) before continuing as in the score. She repeats this in verse two.

Describing her ornamentation of verse two isn't easy. Everyone else sings a four note upward run on "Quando rapito" while leaving "in estasi" unaltered. Nikita also sings the four note run but then replaces the trill by another upward run of eight semiquavers which doubles back on itself just in time. Thereafter almost every phrase is changed, including phrases modern singers leave well alone such as "mi giura eterna fè" and "gli affani miei dimentico". The final "schiuda il ciel per me" is extended upwards by a staccato flourish to a top D (Hempel and Tetrazzini do something similar here), though Nikita sings this passage to "ah" rather than the words in the score. At the very end there is no sustained top D (three cheers!) but a ten-second *messa di voce* trill on F# resolving to G. Is it all too much? Quite possibly yes. But I have to own that I have become rather fond of it and on this evidence she was clearly a virtuosa worthy of mention in the same breath as the other sopranos sampled.

There is a sad end to the story. If like me you had never heard of either Mademoiselle Nikita or Louisa Margaret Nicholson, that may be because in 1897 she suffered a bicycle accident that crushed her throat and ended her career. She retired to life as a society figure in Paris to be then completely forgotten.



Two Books on 19th century Singers

Russell Burdekin

Kenneth Stern, *Giuditta Pasta: A Life on the Lyric Stage.* (Palm Springs: Operaphile Press, 2011), http://www.operanostalgia.be/html/Pasta.html
Susie Timms, *Therese Tietjens: Last rose of Victorian opera.* (County Collegiate, 2016). https://www.amazon.co.uk/Therese-Tietjens-Last-Victorian-Opera/dp/0955066778

Recently, I decided to take a gamble and buy two books of which I knew nothing other than the promise of their titles. Both were self published, which, without the benefit of an independent editor, can sometimes result in something of a ramble around a subject as anything that has come up in the course of the research is seen as grist to the mill.

Kenneth Stern's book appears to be the first book in English devoted to Pasta and was a very pleasant surprise. Stern has a background in lecturing on opera and wrote the Grove entry for Pasta so clearly is *au fait* with his subject. Overall, it was an easy and absorbing read that took the reader through a straightforward chronology of her life, with three final chapters summarising her life, her artistry and her voice. Aside from a little repetition – we learn several times that Mozart was not one of her favoured composers – the author has kept his eye firmly on his subject. One valuable feature was the number of quotes from letters, diaries, newspapers etc.. Not only did this provide a first-hand, multifaceted view of the singer but gave variety to the text and really brought to life such events as her first performance in England of Mayr's *Medea in Corinto*. The book is well supported with over 1000 references and came over as a reliable and authoritative source. Except for a few typos, I noticed nothing obviously incorrect, although I made no attempt to cross check. There are a number of appendices including lists of performances and her 1826 contract with the King's Theatre in which she was guaranteed £1000 for her benefit, more than a labourer might earn in 20 years. Given that it is a very well-produced hardback book of almost 600 pages, including an extensive index, $49, while not cheap, does not seem exorbitant (it worked out at under £50 with postage using abebooks.co.uk). The only slight drawback is that the printing has not done full justice to the many illustrations.

The other book, on the mid-19th century soprano Therese Tietjens, was altogether less successful. Timms has already produced one book on Titiens (as she was called in that account) in 2005 but this one is more detailed, although often straying outside its remit. Timms must have devoted an enormous amount of effort in researching it but for some reason has chosen to make little use of supporting references and direct quotes or to provide a bibliography. One also suspects that there is a certain amount of fictionalisation. For example, at Tietjens' London debut, it is stated that "Each time her powerful voice soared above the orchestra she seemed to grow in stature and confidence" (p.31-32) but there is no indication as to whether this is a paraphrase of someone's comments or the author's imagined presence at the event. The result is a book that cannot claim to be an authoritative history but is too detailed to read easily as a fluent, "popular", account. It is a nicely produced paperback and the price comes in at just under £20 from Amazon.

DONIZETTI and VIENNA

Last summer I had the transformative experience of revisiting my favorite city, Vienna, and as I opted to remain there for three months rather than my usual two weeks I felt for the first time as if I were a resident, rather than merely a visitor. Shortly after my arrival in the middle of June I availed myself of the opportunity to note what was scheduled at both the Volksoper and the Vienna State Opera. Both theaters close during July and August for their summer solstice and so I needed to get into high gear if I had any hopes of attending a performance at either theater. I did discover that the State Opera was staging DON PASQUALE but I was discouraged from going any further as tickets there have become quite expensive and are often sold out. Imagine my delight, I guess I was at the right place at the right time, when I encountered in front of the entrance a Mozart wannabe (unfortunately it was not Mozart), hawking tickets at reasonable prices for an evening performance of DON PASQUALE. I didn't think twice and congratulated myself on my good fortune.

On Wednesday, June 29, 2016 I sat in a box on the left Loge where I had a clear view of the orchestra as well as the stage. The staging was incomprehensible to me; not that I didn't understand what was transpiring as I know the score very well but what was the rationale for such an extremist production as that which greeted me? It all took place in a present day lounge bar. I recall the late George Jellinek stating many years ago that we are now in the age of the "Stage Director/Production Designer." After all do we not attend these operas to hear the music and witness the singers? Is it quite necessary to see a "viable" stage interpretation based on someone's interpretation of what the plot is supposed to signify? These often seem based on bizarre interpretations, subplots or contextual reimaginings that anger and annoy me. Such thoughts occur to me with somber regularity as I witness modern production after modern production. I must say though that the evening was a sheer delight in terms of the music. Marco Armiliato was the conductor and the opera was performed UNCUT! Dr. Malatesta and Ernesto were the standouts, the latter hitting the concluding Eb in full voice in his star turn Act Two aria "Cerchero Lontana Terra." Although the final note was a bit clipped it was spot on and I was fully satisfied in witnessing it. Also a high D for him in the second act finale. The trumpet solo beginning Act Two was done from the stage, not from the pit. This was a very invigorating performance of a beloved opera in large part due to the interpretative views of the conductor. The Viennese loved it if their salvos of enthusiastic applause were any indication. Surprisingly for me right before the concluding Garden Scene there was an encore of the Act Three patter duet between Malatesta and Don Pasquale, done in front of a closed curtain, sung at dazzling speed. Opera programs are not free in Vienna as they are in other cities and so I did not make note of any of the singers. They were by and large unknown to me but that did not detract from the quality of the singing. It was quite superb. At some point during the course of one of the intermissions I discovered the existence of a Donizetti Salon in the opera house yet I was unable to locate it at the time; that will be one of my keen objectives this coming summer as I revisit locations dear to my heart.

In a very contemplative mood I sauntered down the grand staircase, through the front doors and out onto the Ring and thence left to Kärtnerstrasse where I leisurely strolled to my lodgings. Rather than take the U Bahn one stop I wished to walk and reflect upon Donizetti's short and tragic life, trying to get into his head. As multitudinous thoughts were racing through my mind I pondered on the interest the Donizetti Society might have in learning something about Donizetti's residence in this city, his triumphs as well as his many trials in enduring the onslaught of his final debilitating illness. At the time I recall emailing Alan Jackson our esteemed treasurer who enthusiastically gave me the green light. And so these random thoughts of mine have prompted this highly sympathetic account of Donizetti and Vienna. Weinstock (p.186; see citation below) referred to DON PASQUALE as possibly his masterpiece *tout court*. I suppose LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR holds that distinction for most of us but as I speculate upon the

exuberant music of this very human and persuasive opera buffa I find myself unbending and I sense that he could well be 100% on point.

To begin with we extrapolate passages from pages 164 to 232 of Herbert Weinstock's DONIZETTI (Pantheon Books, 1963). Although Donizetti research has made significant advances during the past 54 years our Weinstock still proves reliable and dependable. During the Roman rehearsals (probably January 1841) for ADELIA the composer had been in touch with a former student, Bartolomeo Merelli, who was now leasing the Kärntnertortheater in Vienna for the upcoming Italian opera season and Donizetti was angling for some commissions there.

Towards the end of that same year while visiting the Appianis, Gaetano Donizetti started work on what would be the first of his two Viennese operas: LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX. On January 2, 1842 he wrote to his friend Michele Accursi that he would be going to Vienna in March. In fact the completed score was sent to Vienna as early as March 4; Donizetti's reputation for speed was and still remains legendary. The composer arrived in Vienna on March 27, 1842 armed with a letter of introduction from Rossini to Prince Clemens von Metternich. Three days after arriving in the city Donzietti wrote to Tommaso Persico: "Vienna is beautiful, beautiful, beautiful." While he was waiting for a much anticipated appointment at the Viennese court he made his Viennese dêbut on May 4, 1842 conducting Rossini's STABAT MATER in the presence of the Emperor Ferdinand I, his widowed mother the Empress Maria Theresa and the Empress herself Maria Anna. A month earlier Donizetti had been having his portrait painted by Joseph Kriehuber.

His original plan was to leave Vienna by the end of May, a short stay indeed. Donizetti was not an unknown entity by any means to the musical cognoscenti of the city. In fact seventeen of his operas had already been performed there since 1827, and between the period 1827 and 1893 the two major opera houses (the Kärntnertortheater and its successor the Vienna State Opera) had staged a total of 1,694 performances of his works, the favorites being LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR, LUCREZIA BORGIA, L'ELISIR D'AMORE, DOM SEBASTIAN, LA FIGLIA DEL REGGIMENTO, LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX, DON PASQUALE, MARIA DI ROHAN, LA FAVORITA and ANNA BOLENA. On May 16 he dined with His Highness Prince Metternich. Three days later LINDA premiered in Vienna and proved an unqualified success. The Maestro was called out seventeen times. At the third performance the entire Imperial Family was present. Crowds were turned away from the theater every evening and it was recorded, how accurately we don't know, that Vienna had never witnessed such a success. With such overarching musical gods as Mozart and Beethoven as a constant presence (even today!) such unleavened data is hard to reconcile. Be that as it may Vienna loved LINDA for sure; the score was dedicated to Her Majesty the Empress Maria Anna Carolina. On May 28 Donizetti was made a member of the illustrious Gesellschaft Der Musikfreunde and he was feted everywhere. Metternich even tendered a supper in his honor.

Some months later, during November 1842 at the Paris premiere of LINDA, no less an individual than Alexandre Dumas requested Donizetti to write four measures of the opera in his autograph album. Has anyone ever identified the quotation? Has anyone in fact ever seen it?

So . . . the composer did not leave Vienna quite as planned. He conducted two well received performances of Rossini's STABAT MATER on May 30 and June 8 of 1842 at the famous Redoutensaal, earning a well deserved thousand Austrian lire. He was soon officially appointed "Maestro di Cappella e di Camera e Compositore di Corte" on July 3, 1842 with the understanding apparently that he would be spending six months of the year in Vienna. Donizetti realized he was following in the hallowed footsteps of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, not to mention the lesser lights Leopold Anton Kozeluch and Franz Krommer and was understandably flattered by the honor bestowed.

But depart Vienna he did on July 1 and headed for Milan, thus concluding his first Viennese sojourn.

During this period friends observed how his health had worsened: his tall and erect figure had begun to sag at the shoulders, his face was furrowed with deep lines, his eyes were sunken and white speckled his hair and beard. In fact musicologists have noted that Donizetti's letters during

the latter half of 1842 became somewhat erratic, peculiarly frantic and perhaps a bit unbalanced. Certainly overwork contributed and the delirium resulting from his Viennese appointment no doubt added to his highly enervated state of mind. Yet as we know now it was probably the incipient stages of neurosyphilitic degeneration that eventually resulted in Donizetti's death on April 8, 1848.

After the clamorous success of DON PASQUALE in Paris on January 3, 1843 the composer left four days later, arriving in Vienna a second time on January 16 for a much longer period that was to last, with occasional interruptions, for approximately 30 months. His health remained somewhat precarious, From time to time he suffered from his "usual fever" but after a duration of twenty four hours of prostration he was fit once again to return to work, with greater ardor than ever. By February 21 he had completed a "little MISERERE" for the Empress. It premiere was conducted by him on Good Friday, April 14.

During the Spring Vienna witnessed productions not only of Donizetti's early 1828 opera ALINA, REGINA DI GOLCONDA (a "fiasco" wrote Donizetti to Giacomo Pedroni on May 25) but also on the 25th DON PASQUALE (presumably a triumph). He conducted the first performance of his second Vienna opera, MARIA DI ROHAN, on June 5, 1843 at the Kärntnertortheater: extremely well received and Donizetti was greeted with a "sea of applause."

During May and June of 1843 Donizetti completed what was to be his last Italian opera CATERINA CORNARO. He sent the finished score to Tommaso Persico in Naples where it was to be premiered without his supervision or presence. It opened at the Teatro San Carlo on January 12, 1844 but was not a success; in fact it was an abject failure.

By June 30, 1843 the Italian opera season in Vienna was at an end and Donizetti had plans to travel to Paris, to work on a project promised for the Opera, the five act grand opera DOM SÉBASTIEN. He arrived there around July 20 and remained in Paris throughout the rest of the year. DOM SÉBASTIEN was the Maestro's final completed opera. Before leaving once more for Vienna in December he wrote to his brother in law Antonio Vasselli; half in jest he remarked that he was losing his teeth, that his hair was turning gray and that "everything tells me that we are nearing the end."

Arriving in Vienna on December 30 he wrote again to Vasselli a week later: "What a difference between Paris and Vienna: there everything is agitation; here everything is calm." During 1844 Donizetti's creative output did not match his former enthusiasms. He probably tinkered with the incomplete score of LE DUC D'ALBE, wrote some minor pieces for the required concerts at court and also an offertory AVE MARIA.

Word arrived that Donizetti's brother Francesco who was living in Bergamo was seriously unwell. Gaetano was ill as well. On March 19 the composer wrote to his brother-in-law that his Turkish brother Giuseppe would be arriving from Constantinople very soon to visit both brothers: Gaetano in Vienna and Francesco in Bergamo. Since 1828 in Constantinople Giuseppe Donizetti had been employed as Instructor General of the Imperial Ottoman Music at the court of Sultan Mahmud II. At the conclusion of this Vasselli letter he admitted: "I worked desperately until November [1843] with DOM SÉBASTIEN; since then I haven't written a note, and for the time being I won't write one. I'll die of hunger and thirst if I don't work, it's true, but at least I'll leave you the liberty to support me." He was probably exhausted and needed a lengthy rest period, no doubt highly exacerbated by the encroaching symptoms of what was to prove his ultimate years. In another letter to Léon Pillet, manager of the Paris Opéra and dated April 17, Donizetti reported that Pauline Viardot-Garcia had made her Vienna debut in IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA with the popular baritone Georgio Ronconi, "both of them very good."

It was certainly apparent during this period that Donizetti was held in very high esteem by Giuseppe Verdi. March 9, 1844 witnessed the successful premiere of Verdi's fifth opera ERNANI at the Teatro La Fenice, Venice. The first non-Italian city to hear Verdi's new opera was to be Vienna where it was scheduled for a May 30 debut. Knowing that Verdi would not be traveling to Vienna Donizetti wrote to Giacomo Pedroni of the Ricordi Publishing House offering to help stage the work at the Kärntnertortheater. In responding to Donizetti himself Verdi wrote: "I do

not hesitate at all to accept your courteous offer with the greatest gratitude, certain that my notes can only derive great profit from the moment when Donizetti deigns to think about them. Thus I can hope that the musical spirit of that composition will be judged properly. I beg you to be willing to occupy yourself with the general direction as well as with the editing that may be required, especially in the part for Ferretti. To you, Signor Cavaliere, I will not pay compliments. You are among the small number of men who have supreme talent and do not need individual praise. The favor that you are doing me is too distinguished for you to be able to doubt my gratitude. With the most profound esteem , your most devoted servant, G. Verdi."

With the opening of the Italian opera season in May Donizetti witnessed performances of NORMA (it was "worse than unhappy"), LINDA DI CHAMOUNIX ("it was shown a good face") and MARIA DI ROHAN. They were then to be followed by LA GAZZA LADRA, ERNANI and DON PASQUALE. The season concluded with ROBERTO DEVEREUX on June 22 (a fiasco Donizetti reported; he had only attended the final dress rehearsal) and Mercadante's I NORMANNI A PARIGI (Donizetti was absent) . . . "and with it will end the lovely Italian season, which could have been one of the most brilliant and was the most disastrous."

Giuseppe Donizetti arrived in Vienna in early June to be with Gaetano and then left at the end of the month, hoping to meet with both his siblings later on in Bergamo. Gaetano left Vienna around July 12 where he traveled to Bergamo by easy stages and later made subsequent stops throughout Italy. In Naples he participated in the staging of his earlier opera BETLY for which he wrote a new duet, perhaps one of the last pieces he ever composed for the operatic stage. Donizetti lingered long enough in Italy to witness the premiere of his Vienna opera MARIA DI ROHAN at the San Carlo in Naples on November 11 where the opera was unquestionably a major success and the composer was acclaimed wildly by a capacity audience. He arrived back in Vienna on Friday December 5, 1844 at nine in the evening. In a day or two he wrote to his friend Antonio Dolci "the snow falls and the cold is intense."

At this sad point in Donizetti's life it had been rumored that in Vienna (specifically in the dark paths of the Prater) he indulged in erotic excesses. There is of course no proof to substantiate this claim but the rumors did fly in later years by those who supposedly heard of such activity from reliable contemporary sources. Weinstock comments on this briefly; see pp.224 to 226.

And now the "annus horribilis" 1845: "the last year during which he was to be capable of even such sad, diminished participation in active life." The disturbing inroads of his disease now began to alarm even the composer himself. In his letters he regularly complained of such instances as "rheum in the head, producing a kind of hammer that beats on my brain constantly and bewilders me, a callus that makes me limp with great pleasure and great boiling mustard on my neck." He summoned up enough strength and fortitude to supervise the Vienna premiere of his beloved DOM SEBASTIAN. Sung in Leo Herz' German translation he conducted it on February 6. Not knowing German he wrote to the Ricordi publishers "How I sweated, dear Pedroni, while chasing after the notes of the recitatives without knowing what they were saying." He had to cut the score drastically due to time constraints yet it was a rousing success and he conducted the second and third performances as well. Numbers were applauded and encored and the third act septet had to be sung three times, the composer being pulled out before the curtain to receive the accolades of his public. Donizetti noted that the opera received a warmer reception in Vienna than it had in Paris. By the time the Vienna Opera House opened in 1869 DOM SEBASTIAN had been heard in Vienna 122 times. On February 25 he was able to conduct a concert at Prince Metternich's palace and also a court concert on March 8, wearing his "gala uniform of scarlet cloth embroidered in gold."

Otherwise he was not composing much, although he modified some of the music for CATERINA CORNARO early in 1845 for a performance in Parma on February 2, 1845, and was according to Weinstock likely spending much time in bed or under constant medical care. The cold climate still continued to aggravate and distress him. In May both the Paris Opéra and the Théâtre Italien importuned Donizetti to compose an opera for their forthcoming seasons but nothing ever materialized. Donizetti was unhappy with the Italian season at the

Kärntnertortheater and was anxious to leave Vienna for a time as he had experienced a horrible winter. Naples or Paris appealed strongly to him and he finally decided on the latter city. So on July 10, 1845 Gaetano Donizetti left Vienna for the last time, the clouds of mental darkness and physical disease ever gripping him tighter and tighter.

A rarely known document of Donizettiana surfaced some years ago in the Donizetti Commemorative Issue of THE OPERA QUARTERLY (Spring 1998). An article by John Illo entitled "Donizetti in Decline" (pp.55-64) reprinted a memoir of the composer that was originally published in 1854 (YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF THEM, New York) by one Charles George Rosenberg, an English journalist and music critic. While visiting Vienna he had received a letter of introduction to Donizetti from the Imperial Court Pianist to the Court of Austria Leopold de Meyer, somewhat of an erratic and eccentric character himself but apparently wildly popular in his day and very likely well known to the composer. The dating of Rosenberg's encounter with Donizetti is not clear. He stated that it occurred early in 1846 but that was impossible as by that time Donizetti was domiciled in Paris. As Donizettians know by February 1, 1846 the composer was incarcerated at a hospital clinic (asylum as we often read) at Ivry. March or early April 1845 is a probable time frame for the account Rosenberg leaves us. As he entered Donizetti's presence that early Spring morning in Vienna this is what he saw:

"Although previously made acquainted with the illness which had during the last six or seven months been gaining ground upon Donizetti's constitution, the appearance of mental weakness which was to be traced on the whole of his features, was inconceivably painful to me. He was reclining upon a sofa, or rather on a lounge, placed near a closed window, through whose double panes the sunlight was streaming into the apartment. A French novel had fallen from his listless and thin hand. It was lying upon the floor. His cheeks were pale, worn, and, I had almost said, cadaverous, although his lips had a fresh and warm hue as if all the blood in his face had settled in them. As for his slight figure, it was meagre almost to emaciation. The eyes, which I had remembered so well from the period in which some seven years since had been pointed out to me in Paris, had lost all of their former brilliancy. A dull, wandering, and dispirited expression, was alone visible in them. His hair, which had begun to thin, was scattered in a careless and dishevelled style along the edges of his forehead. In a corner of the room, stood his piano. I afterwards found that it was locked. Not a sheet or scrap of music was lying about the apartment." When the composer extended his hand to greet Rosenberg's companion "you might have counted every vein in it under the white skin, as he did so."

On reacting to an amusing observation invoked upon de Meyer's "Marche Marocaine" "Donizetti would have joined us, but as the laugh was quivering on his lips, the exertion he had made use of in giving us the fact, briefly as he had shaped it, proved too much for him, and he sank back upon the lounge literally gasping for breath. His eyes closed. The color that had tinged his cheeks for a brief space, again faded from them. He was ghastly pale. Recovering himself as he saw this, my companion hurried to the door of the apartment and summoned the servant. He entered the saloon, and after for a moment looking at his master, arranged an effervescing draught for him, which was slightly colored with Bordeaux. It was with very great difficulty that Donizetti swallowed it.

"On the following day, I called to learn how Donizetti was. He had recovered, and was again in the same state that we had seen him at the commencement of our visit. So he continued during my stay in Vienna, occasionally taking carriage-exercise, but interdicted the use of the piano . . . Four or five times after this I saw him, but he was perceptibly drawing weaker and occasionally relapsing into a mental imbecility which darkened around his soul. The last visit which I paid him, he seemed brighter than usual. The heavy clouds had unclosed for a brief space which were thickening upon his intellect."

Where exactly did Donizetti reside? Thanks to an acquaintance of mine in the city who is not only an opera enthusiast but a record collector as well I was informed where to go and what to look for. So the following day after a memorable visit to his apartment, fraught with the greatest collection of historic recordings that I have ever seen, I found myself at Wipplingerstrasse 5,

staring at a somewhat nondescript corner edifice. On it was a plaque which when translated stated: "GAETANO DONIZETTI, 1797-1848, Opera Composer from Bergamo and Court Composer in Vienna, Lived and Worked Here in the Years 1843-1845."

Crossing the street I stood for some moments, solemnly contemplating that this is where the Signore was in residence during those years. Weinstock mentioned the address Wipplingerstrasse 394 (p.198) from a Donizetti letter yet it is unclear whether the composer had written it from this residence or from some other location on the same street. If so then I suggest that at some period the street numbers had been altered to account for the obvious discrepancy. What we don't know is what apartment the composer lived in. Even though I would have loved to have intruded my presence inside in an attempt to answer this question good taste forbade me. It is after all a private residence and the street door would certainly have been locked anyway. Yet Rosenberg offers something of a tantalizing clue. Upon his first meeting with Donizetti "I accordingly followed my acquaintance of the hour up the flight of stairs which led to the first floor, . . . " In multi layered buildings, in the United States anyway, the ground floor is level 1 and up we go, incrementally higher and higher. In Vienna however the ground floor is not 1 but is termed "Erdgeschoss" or "Earth Floor" and so floor 1 is only reached after climbing a flight of stairs. So Donizetti's dwelling was certainly what we would term in this country the second floor. Whether another plaque is to be found inside indicating which apartment it was or whether any record was ever kept of this I don't know. But the building as well as the floor is now a matter of record. In a letter dated September 26, 1840 to his Milanese friend Paolo Branca the scholar Ashbrook records that Donizetti wrote "Two rooms are enough." Perhaps it was just a small apartment of two rooms that Merelli had found for Donizetti after all.

As I thought further along these same lines my imagination began to race once more. By now I knew Vienna well enough to plot Donizetti's probable route to the Kärntnertortheater. He could have traversed it in two slightly different directions, both of which he could easily have walked if he were so inclined. A carriage ride would probably have taken him no more than fifteen minutes to arrive at the theater where he exercised much of his artistic endeavors and reveled in his Viennese triumphs. When the Emperor Franz Joseph had the battlement walls of old Vienna torn down by the mid 1850s and created the elegant Ring he also commissioned the Royal [State] Opera House at the juncture of the Kärntnerstrasse and the Opern Ring. Adjoining the old Kärntnertortheater the new opera house first opened in 1869 with a performance of Mozart's DON GIOVANNI. The Kärntnertortheater itself erected in 1709 was by then considered obsolete and so was subsequently razed a year later. Its approximate present day location is where the Hotel Sacher now stands and was also the spot I might add where Antonio Vivaldi breathed his last in 1741.

This past summer I investigated the treasures that the city of Vienna holds of Donizetti material and what I found made me gasp. I discovered in two archives, both at the Austrian National Library and the Palais Mollard Collection, a total of 1,585 items. I have no idea what they represent. This is not including any possible holdings of the Gesellschaft Der Musikfreunde where Donizetti was made a member in 1842. It is some project that perhaps needs to be looked into. Wouldn't it be miraculous for example to discover possible traces of another photograph?

The Metropolitan Opera Gift Shop in New York has for sale a signed letter by Donizetti, in a gold frame with a portrait, for $7,300. It is in French and superscribed only with December 11. Referring to rehearsals for LES MARTYRS it is likely the date can be assigned to 1839 or perhaps 1840. It is simply addressed to "My Dear Sir." Anyone interested?

We all need to do what we have to do to be diligent in keeping the spirit of Gaetano Donizetti alive, whether visually, aurally or through the written word: in whatever sphere our talents or inclinations lie. Let us all keep his music green for the ages yet unborn, fostering a love and an abiding appreciation for this genius of music. We all owe him so much.

Peter C. Walther

Diary

New York, Amore Opera
***La Zingara* (Donizetti) 15 March- 4 June, 2017**
(in Italian with English dialogues)



Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Elysées
***La Reine de Chypre* (Halévy) 7 June (Concert Perf)**

London, Cadogan Hall, Chelsea Opera Group
***Nabucco* (Verdi) 17 June**
(Cond. Marcianò)

Lyon, Opéra de Lyon
***Viva la Mamma* 22 June to 8 July**
(Designer Laurent Pelly)

Napoli, Festival of Opera Buffa
Reggia di Caserta
***Chi dell'altrui si veste presto si spoglia* (Domenico Cimarosa) 1/2 July**

Cooperstown NY, Glimmerglass Festival
***L'assedio di Calais* from 16 July to 19 August**

Salzburg Festival, Grosses Festspielhaus
***Lucrezia Borgia* 27/30 August (Concert perfs)**
(w. Stoyanova, Florez. Cond.Armiliato)

Pesaro, Rossini Opera Festival
Adriatica Arena
***Le Siège de Corinthe* 10/13/16/29 August**
***La pietra del paragone* 11/14/17/20 August**
Teatro Rossini
***Torvaldo e Dorliska* 12/15/18/21 August**

Parma, Verdi festival
Teatro Regio.
***Jérusalem* dates between 28 Sept and 20 Oct**
(w. Annick Massis, Michele Pertusi, Ramon Vargas. Cond. Callegari)
Teatro Farnese
***Stiffelio* dates between 30 Sept and 21 Oct**

Bergamo, Teatro Sociale
***Il borgomastro di Saardam* 24/26 Nov. 2 Dec**
***Che originali* (Mayr), *Il Pigmalione* (Donizetti) 25 Nov, 1/3 Dec [Florez concert 4 Dec]**

TO BE NOTED

London. Chelsea Opera Group 24 Feb 2018 - *Mosè in Egitto* (Rossini)`
Maria Chiara Bertieri is preparing a performing edition of
***Le nozze in villa* written by Donizetti for Mantova in 1821**

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Opinions in the Newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Editor or Committee of the Donizetti Society

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