THE SONG BOOK OF Mme de COUSSY

Alexander Weatherson

So little that offers a real glimpse into the emotional life of any composer has been allowed to survive the passing of the years. A veil of discretion, tactful or otherwise, has drawn a web of obscurity over intimate attachments once part and parcel of an itinerant existence – a counterpart to the mysteries that permanently shelter the machinations of creative discovery. One such material relic however survives in the bowels of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris of the enigmatic relationship between Gaetano Donizetti and the wife of his Parisian banker - the elusive Zélie de Coussy - a random array of evocative vocal survivals that gives an intimate glance at a musical saga once looked on askance but as crucial to his sentimental life as it was deliberately undefined. A poignant relic in which this overlooked dedicatee of *Don Pasquale* - this much-feared and oft-reviled focus for lyrico/amorous fulfilment emerges at last as muse as well as unwary and unintentional *femme fatale,* capturing the glance of the tragic maestro in his final triumphant phase of achievement and decline.

The witness is a yellowing booklet, a loosely-bound assemblage of copyist manuscripts with its beginning in the unconditional admiration of *Lénonor* for *Fernand* and ending in disarray with *L'Ingratitudine*. Dare we turn the pages? With its shabby covers and copybook format it is a much-thumbed romantic forfeit for use at the piano - a forgotten tracing in many hands, cherished or so it would seem, several of its emotive series having impromptu autograph additions by the composer with his breathless asides. Some in a personable script. That of the lady? Who can be sure? But that the book is hers is undeniable.

How it arrived in the celebrated Parisian repository for musical enlightenment is undisclosed. The volume remains indifferently collated and is not even catalogued as an autograph item. It is what? A sentimental compendium for domestic usage with its impromptu changes? A memento mori? Such roles defend its latter-day existence on the back shelves of the great library. It is tempting to believe that potent echoes from the past alone explain its present relegation: in among its faded folios is a not-quite extinct sensation of physical contact, a whiff of patchouli as if one was leaning over the warm shoulder of the maestro with his elusive lady side-by-side at the same piano. An unsolicited intrusion that almost closes the fragile covers and turns the reader away. Did Monsieur Malherbe choose to put it out-of-sight?

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Practically nothing is known of the de Coussy. Was the *particule* assumed? [1] Coussy is quite a common name in France with a variety of spellings. Nothing much remains of his life and times, there is a void before the banking couple first encountered the famous composer (in 1835 or so it would seem) and nothing after he had gone. The annals of private banking are not well-served in France. There is a *History of the Bank of France* of course but no detailed studies of systematic importance to the modest businesses that mushroomed in Donizetti's period of turmoil and change. At least we know something of the husband: soldier become banker, Lieutenant Joseph Auguste de Coussy born in Paris on 26 June 1787 has a recorded career in the ranks of Jean de Dieu, Maréchal Soult during the latter's disorderly retreat from Spain, a role witnessed bravely by his Légion d'Honneur but details of his lifestyle and financial destiny in the Paris of Louis-Philippe are as indistinct as are those of his singular and remarkable wife. His character, his personality, his impact upon the composer and financial probity are subject to continuously indignant denigration from the latter's friends and family. A *Vente Tajan* sales catalogue from as late as 2002 puts their view in a nutshell: in order to sell a letter from the maestro to a friend inviting him to dinner with Mme de Coussy the author of the catalogue feels constrained to say

"*...laquelle allait petit à petit le porter à un état de démence dont le couple COUSSY profita. En effet, faisant interner le compositeur dans l'asile d'Ivry, il put faire main basse sur ses importants revenus...*" [2]

It was the composer's place of residence when he settled in Paris on a quasi-permanent basis at the height of his fame that enables us to understand his relationship with Auguste de Coussy as well as allowing some notion as to the precise nature of the latter's financial affiliations. Donizetti had been found a residence in the heart of the musical gratin. The maestro lived initially at No. 32 rue Taitbout in the IX Arrondissement; the Café Tortoni he attended daily was nearby at No. 2 rue Taitbout with a backdoor on to No. 22 Boulevard des Italiens; in between these sites lived Nestor Roqueplan - then director of the *Opéra* (at 25 rue Taitbout), while in the contiguous rue de la Grange-Batelière , a banking venue even today if no longer quite so lyrical was housed (at No.10) the *frères Tattet* Agents de Change major accomplices in the musical affairs of the day. More importantly, however, in an extension to the Grange-Batelière - a part renamed rue Drouot in 1847 - stands the Hotel d'Augny, now Mairie of the IX Arrondissement which in Donizetti's lifetime was the Parisian residence of Don Alejandro Maria de Aguado y Ramirez de Estenoz, *Marqués de la Marismas del*

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[1] Maréchal Oudinot, duc de Reggio married as his second wife a Eugénie de Coussy in 1812 but family links with Auguste and Zélie are yet to be proved. *Cfr* Louis Chardigny *Les Meréchaux de Napoléon* (Paris 1977) np 227. That he was breveted with the particule "de Coussy" on 15 December 1812 in the army of Napoléon when such an *ancien-régime* denomination was still largely under a cloud probably indicates that it was genuine

[2] If you can believe what Sales Catalogues say you can believe anything! Vente Tajan, Geneva 18 November 2002. Catalogue #32 No 66

Guadalquivir y vizconde de Monte Ricco, the fabulously rich Spanish Banker upon whom the *Académie Royale de Musique* (the *Opéra*) currently relied for its financial health.

Who can doubt that it was such an all-powerful mécène that determined Donizetti's presence. He lived in a place commensurate with his ambitions. The Marquis Aguado - the most prominent cultural manipulator in Paris and Rossini's most powerful patron, host, friend and *aficionado* - whose Bordeaux chateau[3] had supplied shelter from a cholera epidemic leading him to accept the incarico of buying works for Aguado's celebrated gallery of a paintings, Rossini's urgent invitation had brought Donizetti to Paris in the first place - so if it was a Rossinian decision that the composer should live in this specifically fruitful corner of the great city it would be no great surprise, nor would it be surprising if he was responsible for Donizetti's choice of banker - a comrade in arms, friend, protégé and apprentice of his noble patron.

Auguste de Coussy and his wife lived at No 15 rue de la Grange-Batelière breathing an identical Spanish air and sharing the same gilded pavement to endorse his military recIâme. He was no *parvenu* this Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur and had no right to disappear so completely as he seems to have done. The whole area in which he and his wife elected to live was suffused with music; the Jockey Club whose members studied form at the Ballet when horse flesh was not available had been founded just before Donizetti arrived (in 1833) and flourished on the corner of the rue du Helder and the Boulevard. Rossini himself, Michele Carafa, Vincenzo Bellini and Fromental Halèvy together with most of the favourite singers of the day (as well as most of their rivals) were within reach as was the Théâtre-Italien and the footloose Théâtre de l'Opéra Comique whose descendent stages still thrive today in much the same busy streets. The Grandee Aguado and the slightly younger de Coussy had fought together under Soult in the Battle of the Pyrenées (in 1813-14) until driven by Wellington and a mixed bag of co-belligerents over the border into France. A barely co-ordinated jumble of Spanish and French participants that subsequently bonded in powerful friendships and alliances in a Paris where Maréchal Soult was destined to become prime minister.

It had been the most bizarre of military manoeuvres that had brought Alejandro Aguado and Auguste de Coussy together. Astute, politically opportunist, born in Seville in 1784 of noble descent, the millionaire marquis had begun fighting *against* the French in the Spanish War of Independence, then took up the cause of Joseph Bonaparte - the brother that Napoleon had hopelessly imposed upon Spain - joining the French troops sent to support him and rising to be colonel

[3] He owned the celebrated Chateau Margaux as well as the out-of-town Chateau de Petit-bourg in the Seine et Oise which had been used as a hunting lodge by Louis XV

The Marquis Alejandro Aguado de las Marismas



and aide-de-camp to the Maréchal in command who was notoriously ambivalent about imperial nepotism. But when, exactly, and how, the unknown Auguste de Coussy came to the notice of Aguado we shall never know.

Whatever its origin it proved to be an affinity provoking a mixed bag of loyalties, retreats and recoveries but ending-up with prosperous exile in the French capital where, thanks to family resources, Aguado promptly became a triumphant banker. Colonial deals and insider-orientated international loans had initially encouraged him to make his peace with Ferdinand VII at home but his practical endorsement - instead of confirming a native loyalty to Spain - paradoxically encouraged this slippery sunflower to take French nationality instead! Paris was worth more than the magnificent canals which had been his brainchild. But handsome, talented, a superb business-man, capable of great things, distinguished, affable and brave, Aguado was above all a man of culture and where else should he find an ideal residence than in Paris?

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The *sequence* of the songs in this book is not without significance nor is their relevance to the cause of amorous intimacy. A few of the manuscripts are prior to publication, some are post-publication but almost all the contents have spontaneous revisions with amendments to dynamics and/or other changes and modifications. Even if no one can ever be completely sure how and when such an amorous litany actually began the music of this battered volume supplies more than one clue - even a timetable of sorts - with now and then an occasional emotional pressure-gauge signalling a climax: '*Pas d'autre amour que toi*' speaks volumes and is entirely in the hand of the composer while '*Tu m'aimes plus*' ends the series.

The contents (some 15 distinct items) are as follows:

CONTENTS

1. *O mon Fernand* (La Favourite) 14pp 1 blank (copyist Ms)
with musical variants, some autograph, some in other hands

2. *Pas d'autre amour que toi* 11pp (I blank and some pasting over)
fully autograph dated and dedicated "*Paris le 21 Xbre 1841*"

3. *Evviva Sr. Gaetan!!! Donizetti!!!* 1p fully autograph

4. *Valz sur la Romance Je ne me plaignis pas* 1p fully autograph
(together with) *Je ne me plaignis pas 9pp* (copyist Ms)
1 blank. Autograph dynamic markings

5. *Il serait là* 6pp (copyist Ms)
Autograph dynamics

6. *Corri destrier* 6pp (copyist Ms)
Autograph dynamics – added notation

7. *Qui dove mercè negasti* 9pp 1 blank (copyist Ms)
Autograph dynamics and headed autograph "*A Madame de Coussy*"

8. *Le bal Masqué* [Jacob] 5pp (copyist Ms)
Autograph dynamics and dedication "*Pour Mad. de Coussy.Donizetti*"

9. *Oh! Ne me chasse pas* 3pp (copyist Ms)
Autograph dynamics

10.*Or ch'io sono a te rapita* 3pp1 blank (copyist Ms)
Autograph dynamics

11. *Les Revenants* [Jacob] (copyist Ms)
Autograph dynamics and additions

12. *Morte* 5pp 1 blank (copyist Ms)
Autograph dynamics and dedication "*A Madame de Coussy*"

13. "*Romance/Composée et dediée à Madame [Z de C] par D*" autograph title
Pourquoi me dire 2pp
Part-copyist manuscript music, autograph text

14.Three pages of sketches 1p entirely autograph,
pp2 and 3 part copyist with autograph additions

15. *L'Ingratitudine* [incomplete Schonenberger edition] 2pp
Tu m'aimes plus!
One minor autograph change to music

That they first met in 1835 – even if we don't quite know when or how – is recorded. That she was on his mind in 1836 (ie *before the death of Virginia* in 1838) we also know;[4] the dedications listed above, added to the dedication of his masterwork *Don Pasquale* to her in 1843 confirms that the songbook opening

[4] As evidenced by the dedication to her of '*Voga. Voga il vento tace*' in *Nuits d'été à Pausilippe* (1836)

with *La Favourite* was a point of departure of something far more than tender acquaintance.

The music of the Song Book is for two voices, for "voce virile" (*ténor* according to the clefs) and soprano. Do we visualise the couple singing duets with Gaetano and Zélie as protagonists in a domestic scena or is this merely a vulgar speculation? But it also supplies another consideration – not in respect of the historical origin of the songs (which cannot be in chronological order) but in respect of the evolution of the *affaire,* some of the pieces included being still warm from the pen while others are copyist transcriptions of vocal itema composed earlier and elsewhere and included here as songs to be played through with Zélie for empathic editing - thus winning a new dynamic pointing and a perfectly tangible *frisson.* Few items are completely autograph and composed *all'improviso* at her side, but the manuscripts of songs already in print have a recognisable immediacy. One item only –and this the last – is a printed score but pointedly in this instance – a mere fragment.

Some of the them are blue-prints. The *affaire* – as chronologically suggested by the order of the items here includes songs like '*Qui dove mercé negasti'* and '*Or ch'io sono a te rapita'* which are certainly are authentic states of vocal offerings later to be depersonalised by the composer in printed versions.

Stylistically the contents differ notably from these known versions. The salon songs of Donizetti and his Italian contemporaries are very seldom to be heard now within their original vocal contours. In an age where opera ruled, even the amateur vocalist sought an extra-theatrical emotive response to his or her modest efforts using improvised dynamics and *portamenti* which were conspicuously absent on the page but were a *sine-qua-non* round the piano. It is no good invoking lieder. These manuscripts have a pointing discarded for public dissemination - a levelling in which keys have been simplified and daring modulations removed. The phrasing, the dynamics so carefully inserted into these performances at Zélie's side, having been cruelly discarded.

The poets of this Song Book too are a mixed bag. Many are not identifiable: some of the texts of the unpublished items may be by Zélie de Coussy herself whose lachrymose train of thought (all too evident in her surviving letters) is unmistakable. The Bergamasc maestro seems to have readily accepted such a literary challenge to his musical skills while making fun of her wayward French. A gauge of love? He set such querulous offerings with a gravity that barely conceals both irritation and amusement. In any sensible context the incredible diatribe of '*Je ne me plaignis pas*' can scarcely be described as a poem at all and his laconic setting seems to have indulged both these contrary responses to the full. Has he simply set to music one of her complaining letters? A deadpan feat, naughtily emphasised by compiling a waltz to add to the gaiety? There is a strangely intimate aura about such an absurd idea whose absence of formal

melodic derivation supplies a whole succession of erotic overtones to underpin the results.

Some of the texts seem almost like a private conversation or covert amorous exchange. Most especially in their sequence, the order in which the songs appear in the Song Book may not be without a concealed programme. For example '*Oh! Ne me chasse pas'* is immediately followed by '*Or ch'io sono a te rapita'*. The *plainte* [of Zélie?] instantly capped by the meridional assurance [of the maestro?]. But maybe it should be the other way round?

Even the copyists of the various manuscripts invite questions we are unable to answer. Who were all these different scribes? Are they Italians writing such bad French (only one of the copies is linguistically irreproachable) or were they Donizetti's pupils as had so often been the case in Naples which would make the defects understandable? Do we see here the hand of Matteo Salvi or Uranio Fontana? Some stretches of the music appear to be the work of an elderly scribe - an Italian acquaintance in all probability whose services were on hand in Vienna? And how is it that Donizetti had to make so many corrections to music that had already been copied more than once? Was it his practice (like that of Giovanni Pacini) to have his compositions copied while awaiting completion – the work to be finalised and corrected at the piano of his mistress? It is clear that whatever the attractions of the lady in question that a cosy domestic environment came to the aid of musical revision by this unwilling bachelor, editing and re-editing being fruitful both at her piano as at her table according to the foolish myths surrounding the gestation of *La Favorite.*

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Documentary coverage of the contacts of Donizetti with the de Coussy ménage begins at the time of *Marino Faliero*. The composer first makes reference to Auguste in a letter of 16 July 1835 to Gaetano Cobianchi [Zavadini 170] characteristically giving his address as "15 Rue Grange Batelière" (sic). Reference to Zélie follows in a letter to Auguste of 8 August with an envoi "*cose amabili a Mad. De Coussy'* [Z 173b] while a successive letter of 24 March 1836 with its reference to his own award of the Légion d'Honneur uncovers a distinct rise of temperature: "*Come avrà gioito Zélie!"*

Friendly references continued on a regular basis, it is clear that on his travels Donizetti used the home of Auguste and Zélie de Coussy as a musical base and established such a relationship that he could write to the Marquis de Custine inviting him to a concert "*chez Mr et Mme de Coussy qui seraien charmés de vous recevoir*".

The joint letter from Auguste and Zélie to the composer on Christmas Eve 1840 [Z AppendixA.29] is of the greatest significance especially to the virulently negative view of Madame de Coussy long cherished in Italy and elsewhere. They

write as bosom friends, the most revealing extract, however, is the plaintive literary rondò added by Zélie making it transparently clear that the foundation of an affaire was already *in situ*. Are we to assume that this codicil was added without the knowledge of her husband? The formal terms with which she addresses the composer are a red-herring (she calls him "*Monsieur*" and "*vous*" unlike the "*tu*" of Auguste but these frigid terms were bon-ton for women of standing), the actual message of this furtive envoi however, is already overheated: *"Je suis déjà allée deux fois à la Favorite, sans jamais pu rester au quatrième acte. Je suis si faible et si souffrante que je dois redouter les émotions trop fortes, et cette romance et duo me rappelant temps plus heureux, me déchirent le cœur."*

By the time the Song Book was in existence, however, neither the celebrated dining table nor the shared piano were any longer in the rue de la Grange Batelière. Early in the 1840's the de Coussy ménage transferred to 8 rue de la Michodière – even nearer to Donizetti who, when freed from musical duties at the Imperial Court of Vienna, elected to stay at the Hotel Manchester. The Marquis Aguardo was however as active in Paris as never before: "*L'Opéra n'est pas sans quelques resemblance avec certaines combinaisions gouvermentales. Il a bien à peu près ses six ou sept ministers qui administrant aussi...sous le bon Plaisir de M.Aguado, marquis de Las Marismas, chef effectif et invisible du cabinet*" [5] A role never concealed from Donizetti: "*Ora il Marchese Aguado vorrebe un'opera in 4 atti per l'Accademia oltre il mio Duca D'Alba*" he wrote to Giovanni Ricordi on 23 May 1841 [Z 200] The business compatibility that linked him to Auguste de Coussy and with Aguado remaining constant until the death of all these protagonists.

How old was Zélie de Coussy? The malice she received at home in Italy is almost comic: "*quella donna di 50 anni*" according to his brother-in-law who never of course met her but "*la vecchia*" peppers his correspondence. Alas an example of the wishful thinking and denigration of someone both physically and financially incapable of coming to the assistance of the now mortally ill maestro. The fact that Zélie was there at his side in his final Parisian days while Toto Vasselli was in Rome never assuaged his guilt. He was taken to task by Michele Accursi: "*Sono stato veramente sensibile alla tua espressione nel credere Gaetano in preda a persone interessate ed isolato da veri amici. Se tu sapesti la vita che facciamo da sei mesi non parleresti cosi. Se tu conoscessi cosa habbia fatto, e facia la famiglia de Cousi* [sic] *, conosceresti li falsi, ed infami rapporti avuti. Ti dico che io, la famiglia de Cousi abbiamo fatti sagrifici di tutti sorti. Per dio è crudele di non aver neppure un'apparente riconoscenza a tanti sagrifici, se non da Gaetano, che diffida di me, almeno da suoi amici."*[6]

[5] A-L Maillot *La Musique au Theatre* (Paris 1865) 92

[6] Letter of 23 January 1846

And who was she precisely? The Song Book supplies the sole clue, one that explains her linguistic hurdles. She was almost certainly Spanish. It is a puzzle to be resolved in the way of Baron Ochs in a later musical exemplar, that is with sudden comprehension: "*Mariandel? The Marchallin? Octavian!*" could be an echo of *"Zélie? De Coussy? Aguado!"* thus resolving the conundrum with a suitably operatic panache. We simply do not know where she came-from or where she went, but her financial status and social standing had always been remarkably assured.

It is the opening items of the Song Book that set the pace for this understanding. Most especially Item 3 with its Iberian quote and *Dom Sébastien*; followed by the composer's amusement at her faulty French in Item 4; Item 5 with its despair heralds Item 6 *'Corri destrier'* with so much more sophisticated a text than the preceding items however urgent or seductive and even in its Neapolitan guise as *'L'amante spagnuolo'* finding an especially appropriate place here - its hero galloping bolero-wise to his beloved. It is far more measured an offering to Zélie than is usual in this collection, with a compulsive refrain reaching a thrilling climax and a vocal line notable for some vaulting scale passages. Altogether an engaging lyric with a life-enhancing lilt and pulsation. Is this key song the answer to our question?

Appendix

A list of further items dedicated to Zélie de Coussy

1. *Il barcaiuolo* (L.Tarantini) pub 1836 by Girard in Nuits d'été à Pausilippe
2. *La ninna nonna/nanna* (A. de Lauzières) pub 1838/9 by Girard in Un hiver à Paris ou Reveries Napolitaines
3. *La pazza di sant'.Elena* (A.Nourrit) Written in Naples in 1838 with a text by the great tenor it was first published in Un hiver à Paria and republished in French (as '*La Folle de St Hélène*') by Latte in 1839. It is clear that the French text was initially by the composer who intended to replace it in the Girard album *cfr* Letter of Nourrit to Duverger of 16 August 1838 [in] M-L Quicherat *Adolphe Nourrit: sa vie, son talent, son caractère* (Paris 1867) Letter 79, 28
4. *Tu mi chiedo s'io t'adoro* (anon) pub 1840
5. *Non amerò che te* Romanza pub by Ricordi 1842
6. *La mère et l'enfant* (A.Richomme) pub 1847 by Girard in Dernières glânes musicales. Donizetti per Camera
7. *Le petit Montagnard* (anon) pub by Cottrau 1849 in Villa Barbaia. Fiori di sepolcro. Donizetti per Camera\

NB The "Trente-six vocalises' published by the tenor Marco Bordogni (1788-1856) pub Schlesinger (c1833) were dedicated to Madame de Coussy

Thirty-Six Vocalises in Modern Style by Marco Bordogni

Adapted to Acoustical Phonetics by Dan H. Marek

[Giulio Marco Bordogni (1789-1856)]

(Giulio) Marco Bordogni, another of the extraordinary group of *Bermasco* tenors, was born in Gazzanniga, near Bergamo on Jan. 23, 1789. He studied in Simone Mayr's school in Bergamo, which opened in 1805. Other successful pupils of the school included Giovanni Battista Rubini and Gaetano Donizetti. Mayr was an important figure in the development of 19th century melodramatic Italian opera and was a strong influence on Donizetti and Verdi. His brilliance as a teacher is manifest in the outstanding careers of his pupils and accounts for the attractive musicality of Bordogni's vocalises. Bordogni's first important engagement was at the Teatro Re in Milan as Argirio in Rossini's *Tancredi* in 1813. For the next six years he continued to sing with increasing popularity in Italian theaters. He was identified as a Rossini tenor, promoting the composer's music, and in 1819 he was engaged as the leading tenor at the Théâtre-Italien in Paris. His success was so pronounced, that he was appointed Professor of Singing at the *Conservatoire* the following year, a post he had to relinquish in a few years because of the conflict with his singing career. Bordogni sang the Paris premieres of no less than ten Rossini operas. Rossini assumed the directorship of the Théâtre-Italien in 1825. Bordogni then created the role of Count Libenskof in Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims* and continued to sing leading roles at the Théâtre-Italien until his retirement in 1833. Never known for the size or brilliance of his voice, Bordogni, like Rubini, was an indifferent actor. Indeed, he was often criticized for his lack of volume in large theaters. However, he was an absolute master of coloratura, and his graceful and effortless musicality was greatly valued in the age when such virtuosity was esteemed. I am sure that Rossini valued these virtues highly, for he agreed to engage Michael Balfe for the Théâtre-Italien, only on the proviso that the young baritone would undertake a year's study with Bordogni.

Yielding to the repeated entreaties of Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842), the director of the *Conservatoire,* Bordogni resumed his teaching career and was a distinguished member of the faculty there for twenty years. His fame as a singer and teacher attracted students from all over Europe, and he numbered among his students some of the greatest singers of the epoch. Among them were Henriette Sontag (1806-1854), Julie Dorus-Gras (1805-1896), Hermine Rudersdorff (1822-1882), Laure Cinti-Damoreau (1801-1863), Michael Balfe (1808-1870), known today as an accomplished composer, but a fine baritone in his day, and Rubini's successor, Giovanni Mario (1810-1883. Bordogni's achievements were recognized by the bestowal of the *Légion d'Honneur* and numerous other awards.

level of singing today is at its lowest ebb in history. Dr. Berton Coffin (1910-1987) wisely stated that "there is a higher level of mediocrity now than ever before". Those who are dissatisfied with the platitudes and generalities of some teachers and coaches who espouse the idea of "organic singing," may be led to investigate this mountain of literature devoted to singing. The result is often more confusion and discouragement. It doesn't help that this generation is exposed to an atmosphere of instant success, as exemplified by the "American Idol" type programs and *Singing for Dummies![v]* So what is the problem? As usual, the answer is complex.

Even though the constant refrain throughout vocal history was the lament that "the art of singing is in a state of decay," I think we can start with the admission that the singing and teaching in the previous four centuries was, on the whole, vastly superior to our own. The evidence is in the music composed for the virtuoso singers of those times. There are many, many examples of great singers who could execute music too difficult for today's singers and vast amounts of historical pedagogical vocal literature written by these singers and others that are being largely ignored by today's singers. Let us see if we can pinpoint some of the reasons for this decline and lack of interest.

I believe that the reason that so many of these books on singing do not lead to satisfaction and improvement is that many of the *vocalises* therein, *presuppose that the student has solved the problem of the emission and management of the voice.* The sad fact is that very few young singers have accomplished this basic requirement. Everyone understands that it takes ten years or more to form a classical pianist or violinist but, since nearly everyone can sing on some level, the *art* of singing seems deceptively easy. Voice students of the past started very young and were carefully guided in their formative years with a steady diet of fundamentals. The atmosphere in the great singing schools of the 17th and 18th centuries, where the young students (castrati) lived in the school and were given daily voice lessons by the masters, as well as other courses such as solfeggio, composition, and literature could not be duplicated today, even if such a severe regimen were desirable. However, a concentration on fundamentals until the student is ready for more advanced work is certainly possible and necessary. The great Maria Malibran and Cecilia Bartoli, of our time, have one thing in common: both were forbidden to sing even one song for a whole year while they were concentrating on technique!

Many of the classics of historical vocal pedagogy attempted to address this problem, but some of this writing is perfunctory, turgid, and contradictory. Many of the writers were attempting to describe sensations they had experienced while singing, without understanding the underlying reasons for such phenomena. Berton Coffin, in his *Overtones of Bel Canto[vi]* and my *Singing: The First Art[vii]* (both published by Scarecrow Press) have addressed the issue of emission with explanations of the acoustics of the voice, breathing, and attacks on the tone

Theodore Baker (1851-1934), the chief editor and translator for G. Schirmer for many years, wrote the following in his introduction to Bordogni's *Thirty-Six Vocalises*:

And it should not be forgotten that, although the art of coloratura now-a-days occupies by no means the same proud eminence that it did half a century ago, *a complete control of the voice is still as essential for the effective interpretation of modern dramatic or lyric compositions as for the airy arabesques of Rossini or Donizetti.* [Italics mine, DHM]

While fulfilling the duties of his professorship, Bordogni found time to embody the results of his experience in a series of practical vocal studies, which were soon adapted as standard instruction books, not only in the Paris Conservatory, but in the leading music schools throughout the world.[i] These "Vocalises" may, unquestionably, take high rank among the best vocal text-books ever published, and fully deserve, from every point of view, the celebrity they have attained. They not only promote rapid and even technical development, but are, in their way, models of pure vocal style, especially on the side of clean and elegant phrasing. Their graceful, charming melody is so attractive as to render their study a delight, for no teacher understood better than Bordogni, how to present the most difficult tasks of coloratura – technique in pleasing and thoroughly vocal forms, and to invest with real interest those exercises in agility which are so apt to become dry and wearisome[ii].

Enrico Delle Sedie (1882-1907), an Italian baritone who was one of the early Verdi interpreters and a great teacher of singing, made the following statement about why he felt inspired to write his manual on singing, *L'estetica del canto e dell' arte melodramatica* (1885):

My object was to awaken in some and develop in others, the taste and respect of old traditions, which have created many eminent artists. The decay of the *lyric art*, of which we often complain, is, in my idea, more to be attributed to the oblivion of these traditions than to the want of interpreters possessing the necessary vocal means to render worthily the works of the old masters.

The *apparent* facility with which little exercised pupils can execute pieces of modern music, the effects of which are exclusively due to the care the composer has taken to leave nothing to the initiative of the artist, has created among them the grievous illusion that the art of singing is exclusively instinctive and that the natural qualities of their vocal instrument suffice to audaciously interpret the works of the great masters. This is the reason why the most talented amongst them pass from the stage like so many meteors, leaving no trace behind them, and obtaining no other result than that of wrongly directing the taste of the public.[iii]

There are many books on singing, stretching back to Pier Francesco Tosi's *Observations on the Florid Song* (1723)[iv] and including the latest fiber-optic research published by vocal scientists in academia. There is also much advice to the effect that "You can't learn to sing from a book"! Young singers are understandably perplexed when told that they have little technique and that the

along with simple exercises to enhance the student's understanding of these basic skills.

The study of velocity and improvisation should be a part of every singer's daily study, even in this age of Verdi, Wagner, and Puccini, because it develops musicality and neuro-muscular coordination, which is the key to vocal health and longevity. Some of Bordogni's vocalises, published by the Ditson Company, appeared in America under the title of *The Art of Phrasing, Respiration, Accentuation, and Expression.* Until the advent of such tiny voiced "coloratura" sopranos, such as Amelita Galli-Curci (1882-1963), all singers were expected to have substantial voices and to be masters of the florid art as well. Closer to our own time, Joan Sutherland and Maria Callas both started out as Wagnerian singers!

One of the problems of reprinting the vocal pedagogy classics of the past is that they do not take into account the necessity of *aggiustmento* or vowel modification. If they have any vowels indicated at all, they are usually either notated or implied to be the [a], the most dangerous of all the vowels in the top of the voice. Dr. Coffin has shown a way of "tuning" the resonators so they are always in a harmonic relationship with the vocal cords. This is the reason we have adapted the Bordogni vocalises to acoustical phonetics through the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet.

[i] Of special interest is the fact that, to this very day, Bordogni's vocalises have been appropriated by reed, string and brass instrumentalists in the interest of developing a "singing tone". They can be found for sale by leading publishers.

[ii] Baker, Theodore, *Marco Bordogni, 36 Vocalises in Modern Style*, New York, G. Schirmer, ?

[iii] Delle Sedie, Enrico, *Vocal Art, Part I,* New York: G. Schirmer, 1886, 5.

[iv] Tosi, Pier Francesco. *Observations on the Florid Song.* Tr. and annotated by M. Galliard, 1743. Ed. With additional notes by Michael Pilkington, London: Stainer & Bell, 1987.

[v] Phillips, Pamela, *Singing for Dummies*, New York: For Dummies, 2010.

[vi] Coffin, Berton, *Overtones of Bel Canto*, Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980.

[vii] Marek, Dan H., *Singing: The First Art*, Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006.

Σπυρίδων Ξύνδας - Ο Υποψήφιος

Spyridon Xyndas - *O Ypopsifios* (*The ParliamentaryCandidate*)

by Kostas Kardamis, translated by Maria Sourvinou.
Ionian University, Corfu.

On 4 November 2017, Spyridon Xyndas's comic opera, *O Ypopsifios* [The Parliamentary Candidate], was revived at the Municipal Theatre in Corfu, 150 years after its first performance. A DVD was made of the performance, which was a straightforward traditional production. The music is tuneful and original and in the style of contemporary Italian opera but with some more local and regional influences, which must have been uncommon at that time. A copy of the DVD may be obtained from the Corfu Philharmonic Society at a cost of 15 euros. Please email info@fek.gr .

The following article by Kostas Kardamis gives a history and background of the opera. He was responsible for the background musicological work in editing the score and assembling the original version. In 2006, he contributed "Nobile Teatro di San Giacomo di Corfu: an overview of its significance for the Greek ottocento", *Donizetti Society Newsletter* 99.3 (2006): 23-25.

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The comic opera *O Ypopsifios* [The Parliamentary Candidate], composed by Spyridon Xyndas (1817-1896), one of the initial founders of the Philharmonic Society of Corfu (CPS), based on a libretto by Ioannis Rinopoulos (1831-1915), also a member of CPS, has gone down in history as the first full-scale opera in Greek presented by a Greek opera troupe. The opera was actually commissioned by CPS. In the theatrical period 1867-1868 the Philharmonic Society of Corfu undertook the productions of the emblematic theatre of San Giacomo. Actually, the premiere of Xyndas' opera in Corfu in the autumn of 1867 was part of the unknown, until recently, theatrical activity of CPS in the San Giacomo theatre. The opera *O Ypopsifios* pioneered the use of the Demotic Greek in the libretto, i.e. the modern vernacular form of the Greek language, on the one hand, and the music elements of the Ionian Islands and the mainland countryside on the other, all harmonically combined with the operatic conventions of mid-19th century. In addition, the premiere of the opera in Athens in the spring of 1888 gave the impetus for the creation of the first Greek-speaking professional opera troupe, which was the "ancestor" of the National Opera of Greece.

More than anything else, however, the opera *O Ypopsifios* is considered a pioneer when it comes to the issues it criticises. The plot of the first opera in Greek was not related to the glory of the ancient or the recent past. Instead, it presented realistically, though in a comic way, the difficulties of the Corfiot peasants and the ruthless and corrupted politicians who,

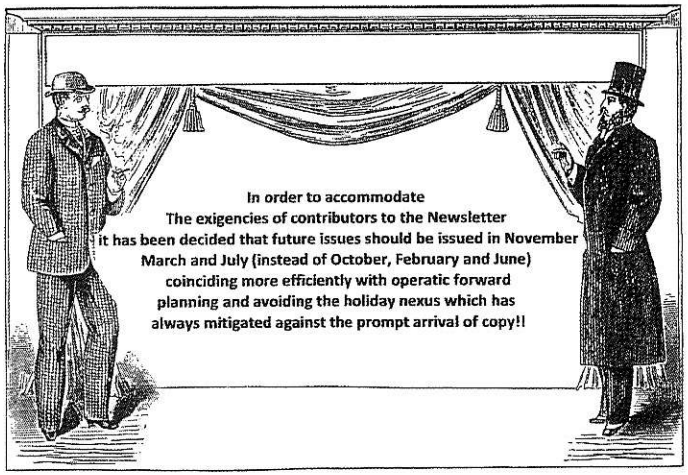
along with their eager followers, exploited the poor and uneducated rural populations of the island, with the sole purpose of coming to power and holding onto power. By undertaking the "impresa" of the San Giacomo Theatre in summer 1867, the CPS undoubtedly played multiple roles in the conditions that formed the opera, as well as in all the above-mentioned pioneer facts. The brief preparation time of a full theatrical season might have acted as the catalyst that urged the people involved to present a complete project, which had long been in the minds of its creators. Indeed, the creation of *O Ypopsifios* had actually begun ten years earlier, while Corfu was still under the British administration. By then Xyndas had already composed the operas *Anna Winter* (1855, librettist: Spyridon Kallos) and *Conte Giuliano* (1856, librettist: Gerasimos Markoras) based on Italian libretti. In February 1857, two comical scenes composed by Xyndas were presented, which in 1867 became the central structural units of *O Ypopsifios*. The first one was the "Wail of the Corfiot peasant" (lyrics written by Xyndas himself) and the second one was entitled "O Ypopsifios" (lyrics written by Nicholas Makris, one of the initial founders of the CPS). Ioannis Rinopoulos, a pioneer in creating a theatrical troupe in CPS and later a drama teacher at the Phoenix Drama Association, was based on the above-mentioned scenes to create the libretto of the opera *O Ypopsifios*. Indeed, he included these scenes in the opera unabridged – the first one in Act I (Aria of Old-Yangos) and the second one in Act II (Scene and Aria of the Parliamentary Candidate).

The point where these concepts meet is the diversification of the urban centre from the countryside and their interdependent relationships, both from an economic and from a political point of view. However, the plot is placed deliberately in the previous political era, still in power in 1857. Indeed, there was never a lack of immoral politicians after the Ionian Islands were annexed to the Kingdom of Greece. Actually, during the period 1867-1868, the agrarian problems in Corfu turned to a serious social and political issue. Bearing the above-mentioned situation in mind, the opera promoted the values, ideals and ideas of those times. Hence, it is clear that *O Ypopsifios* is not the shallow, simplistic and rather caricature opera, as often believed. Instead, it is an opera presenting the serious social problems of the time, staged in the emblematic for the upper class Corfu's theatre and bringing forward in its ostensible simplicity a situation that had little to do with the romantic idealisation of people and conditions. On the contrary, under the guise of a comedy plot, it brought the torturous reality to public.

The social conditions and the human behaviour described in the opera *O Ypopsifios*, still prevalent to the present times, may justify the interventions imposed on the opera in subsequent periods, altering in this way dramatically its targeting. Indeed, beyond any plausible small differences in the later copies of the opera, there are significant differentiations in the structure and the content as compared to its original form. These important deviations from Xyndas' original manuscript seem to reflect interventions in the opera's original form, which, with or without the consent of the composer, were gradually imposed either for practical reasons or because they were considered politically expedient. These interventions must have taken place, if not at the Athenian premiere (14/26.3.1888, Athens Theatre, in the presence of Xyndas and Rinopoulos), certainly immediately after it,

most likely from the moment at which *O Ypopsifios* became an integral part of the repertoire of the Greek Opera Troupe (1889 onwards). However, these subsequent interventions had as a result the complete weakening of the opera, regarding not only its music and drama, but also its social messages. By putting too much emphasis on the happy outcome of the young couple's love story, by transforming the Parliamentary Candidate into a secondary character of a simplistic love plot, by omitting both his farewell with the characteristic "stylish" political speech (highlighted by the musical accompaniment) and the scene of the usher's revelation, as well as any parts in the libretto referring to political interwoven relationships, the opera of Xyndas / Rinopoulos, a targeted social and political criticism in 1867, was transformed in the early 20th century into a naïve love story. This important alteration of the opera's aims shaped its future and the way the audience saw it in the following decades, since, according to the known sources, this later and highly modified version was widespread and established after 1888, as it was staged in Greece and in the major cities of the Greek Diaspora.

The original form of the work was restored in the summer of 2016 by a team of the Music Department of the Ionian University, when a manuscript with the opera's original form came to light, offering not only the unabridged version of the first Greek opera, but also the previously unknown orchestral overture, making it possible to restore its original orchestration. The Philharmonic Society of Corfu and the conductor of its Symphony Orchestra, Alkis Baltas, accepted the challenge, and in November 4th 2017, 150 years after the premiere of the opera *O Ypopsifios*, the first operatic work based on a Greek libretto was revived on stage in its original form, reminding us that in fact little has changed in the Greek society since it was composed.



Experiences of a Biographer

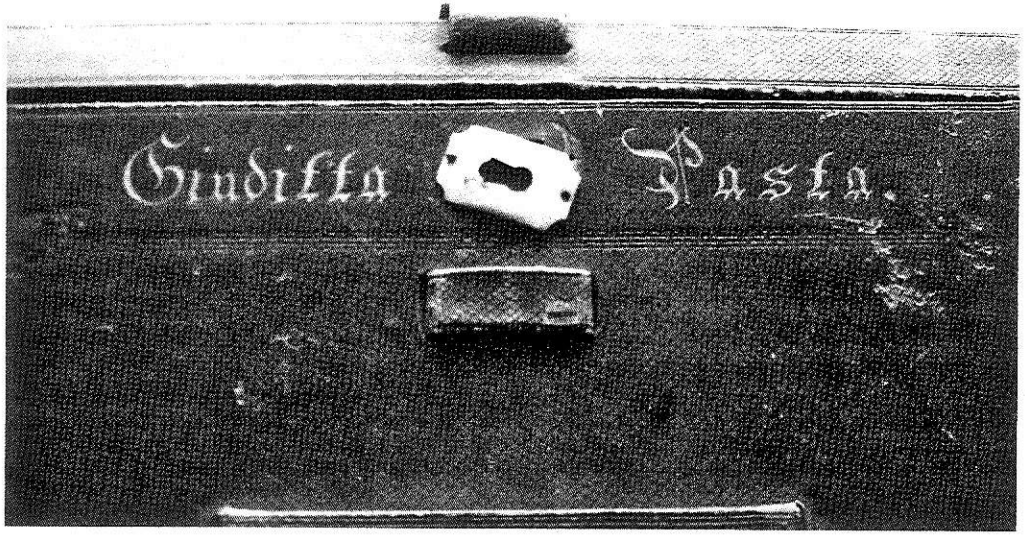
Dr. Kenneth Stern

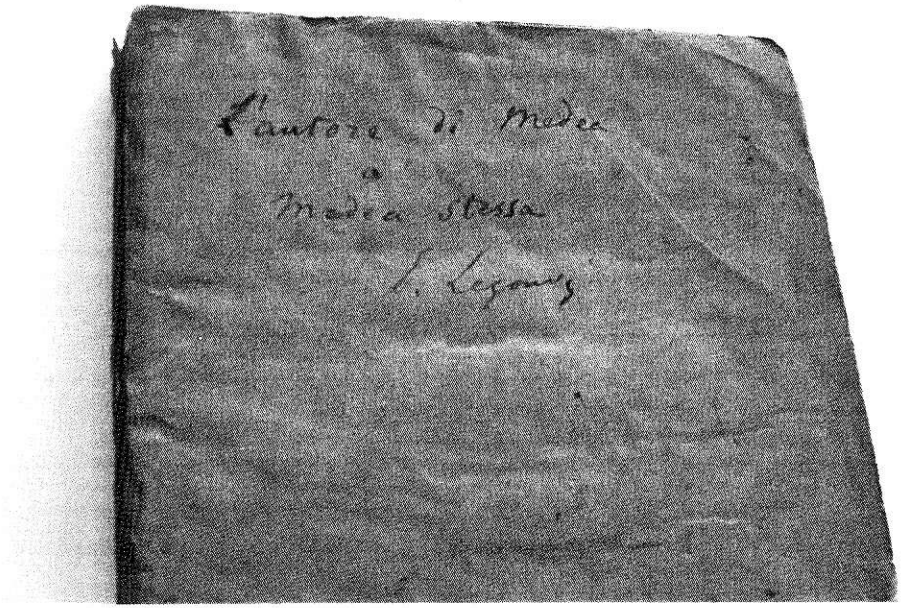
The notion of writing a biography of Giuditta Pasta first came to me way back in 1973 as a topic for a Master's thesis. I had been inspired by articles included in the booklets of various operas issued by Decca/London Records. I traveled from New York to Italy to see if I was capable of this immense challenge, since it would involve fluency both in Italian and French. The staff of the library at La Scala encouraged me, and I and journeyed to Blevio on Lake Como to consult with Pasta's last living direct descendant. The caretakers of Villa Trempo, the soprano's final residence, informed me that I should seek permission from Maurizio Ferranti, who had closed up the villa and now resided some 30 kilometers away. Offers from Henry Ford and others to purchase the property had been rejected. When I arrived he had just awoken from his siesta, and informed me there was nothing left in the villa, and he had given everything to La Scala. I was not the first to make enquires and the elderly gentleman did not want to be bothered. It was true that many paintings and important artifacts had been gifted to the Museo Teatrale alla Scala and the Teatro Sociale in Como. An autograph dealer had acquired important letters from the Villa, including those of Rossini, Bellini, and Liszt, among others, and later sold the collection of 548 items to the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center.

After completing my thesis I decided to expand my research for my Ph.D dissertation and expand it further to a full length biography. The next years were spent becoming increasingly fluent in the necessary languages, and carefully examining the treasures in the Pasta Collection in New York. A series of odd jobs supported my Pasta addiction. There had been one previous biography. GIUDITTA PASTA E I SUOI TEMPI was authored by Maria Ferranti, who had married Pasta's grandson Leonardo. This limited edition (1000 copies) was completed after her death by her daughter Claudia. As I compared Ferranti's transcriptions to the originals that I had discovered, I realized her work was completely unreliable. Not only is it woefully incomplete, but censored to exclude any negative references to the great soprano. Apart from reproductions of paintings and facsimiles of letters, this work is useless. The author was a bit of a prude. One example: since Pasta had some of her greatest triumphs in male roles, she began to refer to her nickname in the masculine form, thus *Il Git*. Her husband Giuseppe became *La Pina*. Nothing about sexual orientation is implied here; the Pastas thought it was just funny. But not Maria Ferranti because she changed it back to *La Git*.

When I had exhausted what was available in New York, including the collection of British newspapers housed in the Library I set off for an extended stay in Europe. When Maurizio Ferranti passed away, Villa Trempo was left to his two nephews. Clelio Ferranti contacted La Scala and was informed that I was engaged in writing Pasta's biography and I was invited to stay with him. Any refuge from cheap hotels was indeed welcome. He had opened the Villa, and after an antiques dealer did an appraisal of much of the furniture that still remained there was a theft.

Quite soon after my arrival in Milan I was invited to visit the Villa. There was a superb copy of Raphael's *Santa Cecilia*, also a portrait of Sarah Siddons, along with lithographs of composers and singers; Giuditta's slippers; part of the gondola she used to navigate her adored lake; and a superb miniature of the diva by Millet which unfortunately has been stolen. There was a throne, presumably a prop from one of the operas; a copy of Canova's *Vestale Tuccia*; a Russian icon and paintings by Giovanni Servi all survived. Pasta's library was still intact, and I could tell which books she read and which ones she did not, as the pages had not been cut. As can be imagined, after years of research in New York I finally entered the hallowed ground, and was rather overwhelmed. It is





uncommon for a biographer actually to reside in the home of a subject from another century.

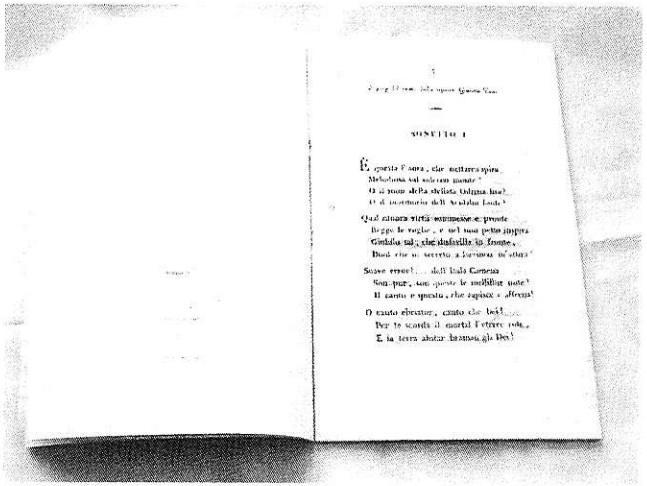
The masks of comedy and tragedy located on the exterior of the building were unblemished, as was the grotto containing bas-reliefs of various singers Pasta admired. Maria Malibran has the place of honor, and there is a special moment when the sun sets that illuminates this great singer's image while all the rest remain in shadow. Two bas-reliefs were mislabeled by Pasta's descendants: Henriette Mainvielle-Fodor had proved a bitter rival during Pasta's reign in Paris and the two had a very public and bitter feud over who had the right to sing the title role in the first performance of *Semiramide* at the Théâtre-Italien. Pasta would never have memorialized Fodor at her villa. Another is Giulia Grisi. When a visitor to the grotto asked Pasta why Grisi had not been included, the diva turned to him and commented "*Oh, mio caro*" which says it all. In the autumn the Villa was chilly, despite some rudimentary heating and a fireplace. More than once I slept in my clothes and really know now what the sheet warmers one sees in museums were used for.

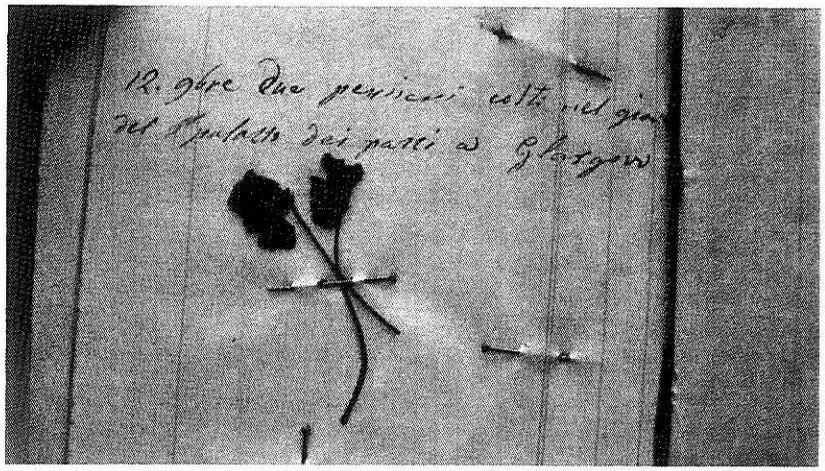
Once, during a two-week period where I remained in the Villa alone, I had an inkling that there was something to be found in the attic. I explored. To my utter amazement, and to the surprise of the brothers, I discovered a great deal of music, hundreds of newspaper clippings Giuditta's mother Rachele had saved, and approximately two thousand letters. I had read about such things in novels, but could not imagine this was happening. Of course reading through all this material extended my research for many months. Some of the letters, in different calligraphy, required extreme patience and a magnifying glass. Especially trying were those individuals who, to save paper, first wrote horizontally and then vertically over their initial efforts. Because Mamma Rachele saved everything, and occasionally wrote comments on the reviews I had a vast array of primary source material. Of course later I traveled extensively throughout Italy to consult various libraries and archives. In Paris, a friend at the Bibliotèque Nationale gave me permission to examine the original newspapers which saved time and eyesight. This is no longer possible as everything now is on microfilm. In London I consulted many different journals, which was time-consuming but of the utmost importance. I confess at times being distracted by graphic description of public hangings. But I digress.

The various letters in the Villa were all in decent shape, and I could make photocopies. The music was a different story. While some pieces survived without blemish, others had succumbed to ravenous rodents who left evidence of their nibbles, and their aftermath. I cleaned up everything and delighted in examining some fantastic pieces, including an unknown introduction to *Anna Bolena*. I purchased as much as I could, and was given a great deal, including Pasta's letter case. I have kept this material now for nearly forty years, and it is time to supervise what will happen to these treasures. The Donizetti Society has very graciously listed the various pieces I have for sale. Some I don't mind going to private hands, others hopefully will be acquired by museums. A snippet of Rossini's hair, for example, urgently needs to be preserved in an archive. One of the more charming items was part of the soprano's journal. She liked to collect wildflowers and garden material from various places she visited, including sojourns to madhouses, a popular nineteenth century pastime. Some are still intact after all these years, though in a delicate condition.

Interested parties should contact me at scanmod1950@gmail.com or 1-917-532-7875. I hope this does not appear too self-serving. I am getting older, and am concerned about the future homes of these extraordinary items. GIUDITTA PASTA: A LIFE ON THE LYRIC STAGE may be purchased directly from me, and I would be pleased to offer a twenty percent discount to members of the Donizetti Society. I am indeed gratified that the biography has received extraordinary reviews on Amazon and by numerous readers.

Souvenirs of a great singer





Compte-rendu de *L'Avant-Scène Opéra*, n°307, novembre-décembre 2018 « *Lucrezia Borgia* de Donizetti » 118 pp

Stella Rollet

Depuis maintenant une quinzaine d'années, *L'Avant-Scène Opéra* a considérablement étoffé sa collection donizettienne. Après *La Favorite* (2012) et *Anna Bolena* (2014) mais aussi les rééditions et mises à jour de *L'Elisir d'amore* (2015) et de *Don Pasquale* (2018[1]), c'est au tour de *Lucrezia Borgia* de rejoindre le catalogue[2], même si l'ouvrage avait déjà fait l'objet d'un article de François Lévy dans le numéro spécial *Hugo à l'Opéra*, dirigé par Arnaud Laster (n°208, 2002).

Le présent volume reprend la coupe classique de *L'Avant-Scène Opéra*. Pour le livret, la rédaction a privilégié pour l'essentiel la version finale du texte plutôt que la version originelle de Felice Romani[3]. Le guide d'écoute qui l'accompagne, passionnant et d'une grande richesse, sait également rester accessible et compréhensible par tous. Au fil des pages et des exemples, Chantal Cazaux y met l'accent sur les innovations musicales que Donizetti introduit dans sa partition. On sait que, depuis *Anna Bolena*, sa personnalité artistique s'est individualisée et ce sujet qui l'inspire – un sujet novateur dans lequel la femme n'est pas une victime mais un acteur agissant, un « monstre », une « âme difforme » pour reprendre les mots de Victor Hugo – lui permet de se détacher encore un peu plus du strict modèle rossinien. Donizetti recherche la fluidité dans les enchaînements entre les numéros et se libère de certaines contraintes de structure ou encore de certaines conventions. Ce penchant pour l'innovation est également souligné par les diverses références à un Donizetti annonciateur ou précurseur de Verdi. « Contraste » est un autre mot-clé qui vient, sous la plume de Chantal Cazaux, qualifier l'ouvrage. Il faut dire que l'intrigue impose presque cette thématique, tant la fête et le drame y sont étroitement mêlés. Paradoxalement, « similitudes » est un terme tout aussi pertinent au regard de certaines répétitions de l'intrigue : les actes I et II ne s'ouvrent-ils pas sur le même Rustighello prêt à enlever Gennaro ? Ce dernier n'est-il pas victime par deux fois d'un empoisonnement ? Pourtant, le compositeur sait éviter l'écueil de la redite et fait la preuve de son talent et de son inventivité. Le guide d'écoute, dans son ensemble, souligne donc largement les audaces et les qualités musicales de l'ouvrage. Il ne faut pas croire pour autant que la critique soit totalement absente d'un propos parfaitement mesuré et objectif.

Quid des articles qui viennent compléter ce numéro ? Au sens strict, ils sont au nombre de trois, même si l'introduction du guide d'écoute, seul texte consacré à la genèse de *Lucrezia Borgia*, occupe une place essentielle dans la publication. Il rappelle les contretemps et les péripéties qui amènent Donizetti à composer cet ouvrage pour l'ouverture du carnaval à La Scala le 26 septembre 1833. Nous touchons ici la seule réserve que nous inspire ce volume : l'absence totale de Donizetti et de son ouvrage dans les différents textes qui font suite au guide d'écoute. Qu'il s'agisse des « regards sur l'œuvre » ou des « contrepoints littéraires », il n'est question que de la Lucrèce historique et de la Lucrèce littéraire. On aurait pu souhaiter que soit, par exemple, abordés les différents visages ou travestissements subis par *Lucrezia Borgia*, en Italie et en France, au gré de la censure et

[1] 2018 est aussi l'année de l'entrée de *Don Pasquale* au répertoire de l'Opéra de Paris.
[2] Un numéro consacré à *Roberto Devereux* est également en préparation (n°313, novembre-décembre 2019).
[3] La traduction proposée a été réalisée en 2018 pour *L'Avant-Scène Opéra* par Laurent Cantagrel.

des procès... À cette nuance près, cette seconde partie du n°307de *L'Avant-Scène Opéra* est captivant et apporte un éclairage crucial sur Lucrèce Borgia. C'est d'abord la Lucrèce historique dont Jean-Yves Boriaud nous rappelle la vie… si éloignée de la légende noire qui accompagne le personnage, une vie aujourd'hui connue grâce aux recherches menées par Maria Bellonci dans les années 1930[4]. Il met en particulier en évidence l'intelligence et la piété d'une femme qui, en dépit de toutes ses qualités, reste le jouet d'alliances matrimoniales orchestrées par son père et son frère et qui répondent à la stratégie d'élévation et à la quête d'influence d'une famille de parvenus espagnols. Contrairement à ce que son titre – « La beauté du drame et de l'opéra » – pourrait laisser penser de l'article de Jean-Marc Hovasse, il est exclusivement consacré à la tragédie de Victor Hugo. Pourtant, même sans allusion explicite, l'évocation de la rapidité avec laquelle le dramaturge a écrit la pièce (une douzaine de jours) ne peut que nous ramener à Donizetti ! L'auteur, quant à lui, privilégie la comparaison entre les deux pièces que Victor Hugo lui-même revendique comme jumelles[5], *Le Roi s'amuse* et *Lucrèce Borgia* – paternité et difformité physique contre maternité et difformité morale – le succès de la seconde tragédie vengeant en quelque sorte le *fiasco* et les déboires judiciaires de la première. Bénédicte Lanot souligne, elle aussi, le parallèle entre ces deux drames tout en interrogeant « la question du mal ». Sa nature, la possibilité de la rédemption, de l'empathie ou du remords sont au cœur d'un discours qui convoque aussi bien la Bible et les grands textes religieux que la mythologie grecque et les philosophes, antiques ou modernes.

Outre la préface de *Lucrèce Borgia*, le n°307 de *L'Avant-Scène Opéra* propose d'autres extraits littéraires, en particulier quelques passages du drame lui-même qui dévoilent Lucrèce, sa complexité, ses déchirements et ses contradictions de femme et de mère. Le personnage est également à l'honneur dans le fragment de *Il Viccolo di Madama Lucrezia* de Mérimée. Les textes de Voltaire et d'Alexandre Dumas la laissent plus en retrait pour se consacrer au clan Borgia dans son ensemble. Dans son *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (1756), le philosophe évoque les mœurs dissolus, l'immoralité et les meurtres auxquels Alexandre VI et son fils César Borgia n'hésitent pas à avoir recours. Il évoque encore leur soif de pouvoir ainsi que leurs relations avec le roi de France, Louis XII. Pourtant, le discours de Voltaire ne se veut pas moralisateur. Il consiste avant tout à mettre en évidence la soumission et l'obéissance du peuple de Rome face à un pouvoir contre lequel il aurait eu toutes les raisons de s'insurger ! Le récit de Dumas, intégré aux *Crimes célèbres* (1839-1840), met également Alexandre VI à l'honneur et dévoile le décalage entre un discours public proclamant son dévouement à l'Église et « au bien de la chrétienté » mais démenti par un comportement privé obscène et incestueux.

La fin du volume revient à la partition de Donizetti. « L'œuvre à l'affiche » nous rappelle le riche parcours d'une partition qui, de sa création à 1875, a fait un tour du monde qu'elle poursuit entre 1950 et 2019. La discographie met à l'honneur le rôle-titre et les grandes divas qui l'ont marqué de leur empreinte, d'une Montserrat Caballé souveraine[6] à Mariella Devia en passant par Leyla Gencer ou Joan Sutherland alors que Jean-Charles Hoffelé, chargé de la vidéographie, peine à trouver une version réellement enthousiasmante. Il faut encore dire ici un mot des illustrations qui font vivre sous nos yeux l'ouvrage et ses interprètes et constituent donc une autre richesse et un point fort de *L'Avant-Scène Opéra*. On retrouve dans ce numéro des gravures incontournables mais aussi des raretés et, si les

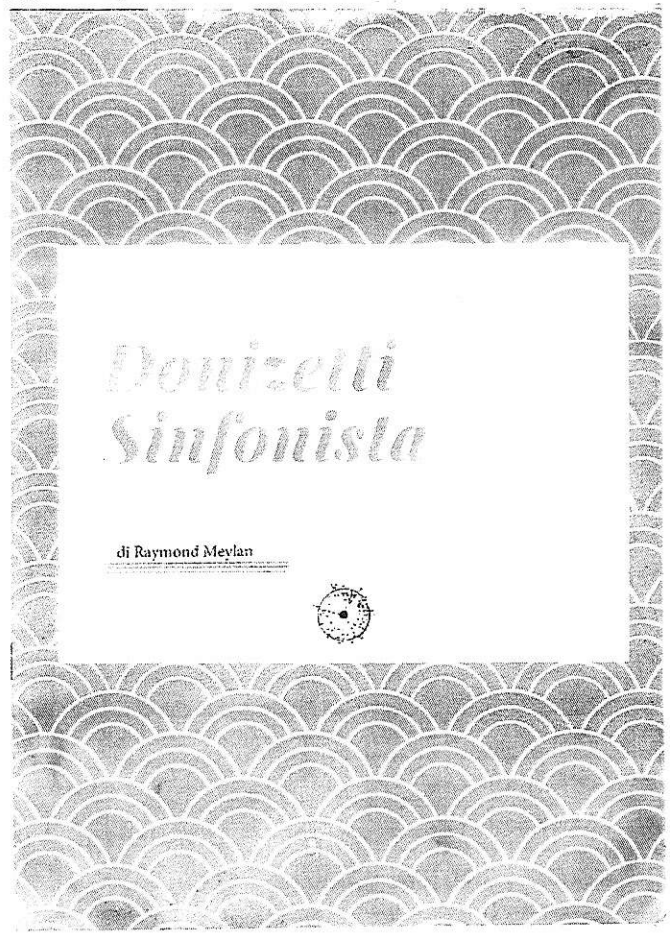
[4] Maria Bellonci, *Lucrezia Borgia. La sua vita e i suoi tempi*, Milano, Mondadori, 1939.

[5] Cf. Victor Hugo, préface de *Lucrèce Borgia*, reproduite par *L'Avant-Scène Opéra*, p. 88-91.

[6] Dans le numéro spécial *Hugo à l'Opéra*, c'est déjà l'interprétation d »e la Caballé qui retenait, plus que toute autre, l'attention de Jean-Charles Hoffelé (cf. « Discographie sélective », in *L'Avant-Scène Opéra*, mai-juin 2002, n°208, p. 36-37).

représentations historiques ne sont pas négligées, ce sont avant tout les productions les plus récentes qui sont privilégiées.

Ce nouveau fleuron qui vient enrichir la collection de *L'Avant-Scène Opéra* rend hommage à une partition aux richesses trop méconnues, une partition trop longtemps délaissée par la France, pays où elle n'a pas bénéficié de la carrière qu'elle méritait. Outre les obstacles légaux qui lui ont été opposés, elle est victime de la chronologie : paraissant après *Lucia di Lammermoor*, elle semble, aux yeux du public et de la critique, imiter une partition dont elle était en réalité l'annonciatrice...



The key Donizettian scholar Raymond Meylan published on 26 August 2018 his important reasearch upon the Symphony that he identified and created from autograph sources. On the three following pages are printed the introduzione. *« Il materiale della « Sinfonia sacrificata » partiture e parti, è venuto fuori, dopo quarant'anni di pazienza. Spero che troverà vita.*

Raymond Meylan

Donizetti sinfonista[1]

Introduzione

Lo scopo di quest'articolo è di presentare la ricostruzione di una grande sinfonia, di forma classica, composta da Donizetti negli ultimi anni della sua attività creatrice e di mostrare che l'autore di tante opere sceniche famose è anche importante sul piano della musica orchestrale benché questo unico capolavoro sinfonico sia rimasto finora segreto.
Quando si percorre il catalogo delle musiche composte da Donizetti, pubblicato nel prezioso libro di Guido Zavadini[2], il primo fatto che colpisce è la quantità di brani inediti. Tra i 601 numeri del catalogo, le opere sono 71 ed è questa parte della produzione del Maestro che lo rese celebre. Il resto, pressappoco sconosciuto, comporta musica sacra, cantate profane, musica vocale da camera e musica strumentale. Nell'insieme si tratta di musiche di circostanze come l'Inno [3] per le nozze del Re Ferdinando Secondo di Napoli con Maria Cristina di Sardegna (21.XI.1832), o la Sinfonia Concertata in re maggiore, composta a Bologna il 17.IX.1816 ed eseguita nel 1817[4]; o il Concertino per Corno Inglese, per il Signore Giovanni Catolfi, alunno del Liceo Filarmonico, anch'esso composto nel 1816 [5], o musica intima regalata ad amici come la Suonata a 4 sanfe per la Signora Marianna Pezzoli-Grattaroli [6]. Non si è mai preoccupato di cercare un'editore per quelle parte della sua produzione, che potremmo chiamare marginale. Abbiamo delle prove chiare che la considerava di minore importanza.
Dopo la morte della suddetta nobile dama, avvenuta nel 1837, la famiglia Pezzoli cercò di disfarsi dei diversi manoscritti donizettiani in suo possesso, incaricando l'amico comune Antonio Dolci di proporne l'acquisto all'autore stesso. Da Parigi, Donizetti rispose il 26 luglio 1839 in questi termini:

> *Quanto alla musica di quì mi parli sono poco tentato atteso che dopo 65 Opera teatrali, pochi motivi più mi restano a creare e dal solo curiosità posso farne l'acquisto, ma quando non si mettano in testa di farmela pagare come cosa preziosa, che alla fine sai bene che nemmeno quella brava signora la pagava a me. Io ne avrei fatto cento volte di più per il favore che ella fece a te ed a me nella coscrizione dove abbisognavi d'argento. Tuttavia sarei curiose di vedere i miei travagli giovanili, quindi regalati*[7].

Per di più Donizetti soleva usare certi brani a diversi fini. Nel 1818, per il funerale di un' amico bergamasco, si eseguì una Sinfonia In Morte di Antonio Capuzzi [8], che riprende l'Allegro della Sinfonia "La Partenza", del 25.X.1817 [9] con l'unica novità dell'aggiunta di un'introduzione lenta.
Ma, guardando bene tra tutti i lavori inediti, ho l'impressione che ci sono dei brani che non hanno niente a che vedere con le opere di circonstanza. Credo che accanto a quest'ultime e alle opere

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[1] Ringrazio il mio amico Marco Stocco per le correzioni di lingua del presente testo
[2] *Donizetti Vita-Musiche-Epistolario*, Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, Bergamo 1948
[3] Catalogo Zavadini 109
[4] pubblicata da Giuseppe Piccioli, presso Carish, Milano 1937
[5] pubblicato da me presso Peters, Francoforte 1966
[6] Bergamo, senza data
[7] n° 323 del epistolario
[8] Cat. Zav. 238, pubblicata da Marc Andreae presso Peters, Francoforte 1979
[9] Cat. Zav. 236

teatrali esista una categoria di musiche donizettiane che chiamerei "musica intima". Intendo l'insieme dei brani che Donizetti scrisse per se stesso, confrontandosi segretamente con i grandi predecessori. In questo reparto metterei, a priori, i Studi di contrappunto e di fuga, le Fughe [10], e poi, con certezza, la maggiore parte dei Quartetti per Archi [11]; ed infine, come coronamento, la Sinfonia in quattro tempi [12] di quì Zavadini conosceva soltanto l'Adagio non troppo e il Minuetto. In altri termini, si potrebbe dire che la musica intima di Donizetti è quella che si distingue nettamente delle forme sacre e sceniche.
Per i pezzi strumentali giovanili, Donizetti ha pure usato titoli che sembrano definire delle forme classiche: sonata, sinfonia, concerto [13] [14]. Ma di fatto le sonate e le sinfonie sono sempre di due soli tempi. Solo il Concerto in re minore per violino, violoncello ed orchestra [15] ha tre tempi, ma è un lavoretto senza ambizione.
Il termine italiano di sinfonia porta a confusione specialmente se riferito alla produzione donizettiana. Viene usato perfino negli autografi con quattro significati:

1° come brano di un tempo per pianoforte, p. e. Un Capriccio In Sinfonia [16],
2° come brano per orchestra, di carattere spesso programmatico, p. e. L'Incendio Sinfonia Sulle tracce del Poemetto di Ferdinando Arrivabene [17],
3° come brano introduttivo di un' opera o di una cantata (in francese ouverture),
4° come sinfonia vera e propria (in francese symphonie), ma di questo tipo non esiste che un solo esempio: quello che fa l'oggetto del presente articolo.

Circostanze della scoperta della Sinfonia in mi minore

Nel 1974 preparai per le edizioni C. F. Peters a Francoforte una revisione dei due tempi Adagio non troppo in do maggiore e Minuetto Presto in mi maggiore, frammenti di una sinfonia per grande orchestra, conservati alla Bibliothèque Nationale di Parigi. La partitura autografa, che non presenta né titolo, né firma, fu acquistata da Charles Malherbe[18] il primo maggio 1896 da un certo Damaré[19] ed è provvista della seguente nota:

> "Autographe de Donizetti / Deux fragments de Symphonie (partition/orchestre) complets./ N° 1 Adagio non troppo avec sourdines 19 pages/ N°2 Menuet 14 pages. (faisant suite) 18 feuilles = 33 pages écrites"

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[10] Cat. Zav. 599-603
[11] Cat. Zav. 250-268, pubblicati dall'Istituto Italiano per la Storia della Musica, presso Parti, Roma e Buenos Aires, 1948
[12] Cat. Zav. 249
[13] Suonata per Oboe e Pianoforte Cat. Zav. 285; Suonata per Flauto e Pianoforte Cat. Zav. 287; Larghetto - Allegro Gallemberg per Violino ed Arpa Cat. Zav. 277; tutti tre pubblicati da me col titolo di Sonate presso Peters, Francoforte, rispettivamente 1966, 1969 e 1970
[14] Sonata per Flauto, Fagotto e Pianoforte (Larghetto - Allegro), il titolo è implicito dalla nota autografa dell'ultima Pagina: *Che Dio ti benefica a benedetta Sonata eterna*; pubblicata col titolo di Trio da Bernhard Päuler presso Peters, Francoforte 1972
[15] Ms. 4142 della Bibliothèque Nationale, a Parigi, pubblicato da Wojciechowski presso Peters, Francoforte, ca. 1978
[16] Cat. Zav. 309
[17] Cat. Zav. .239
[18] 1853-1911, musicologo francese
[19] probabilmente Eugène Damaré, maestro e compositore francese, che scrisse intorno al 1900 una quantità di pezzi brillanti per flauto, tra i quali la famosa Tourterelle

Il manoscritto fu presentato a Bergamo nel 1897[20] all'occasione del Centenario della nascita di Donizetti. Nel catalogo della sezione francese, Malherbe elencava i manoscritti autografi secondo le sue idee della cronologia. I frammenti della Symphonie portavano il n° 32, perciò si può concludere che il musicologo francese ne situava la composizione tra 1840 (n° 31) e 1843 (n° 34) (il n° 33 non porta alcuna data). Dopo il suo ritorno a Parigi, il manoscritto fu registrato alla Bibliothèque du Conservatoire National de Musique, Paris con la signatura Ms. 4138 R(éserve). 24.018 - 5.660 - : 9. Zavadini gli diede il n° 249 nel suo catalogo, classificandolo nelle Composizione non datate di Musica strumentale orchestrale. William Ashbrook[21] riprese la notizia sommariamente :

Sinfonia in 4 temps; only Adagio non troppo and Minuetto survive, undated.

senza fare qualsiasi commento all'interno del suo libro.

Nel corso della mia revisione di questi due tempi (1974), noto essenzialmente la grande maturità di stile, ma anche il fatto che molte indicazioni erano date in francese (*Bassons, Trombones, Ophikléide, Timballes, Caisse, avec Sourdines, peu plus, presser*). Perciò mi convinsi che la sinfonia fu scritta a Parigi e destinata ad un'orchestra francese, cioè tra La Fille du Régiment ("première" il 11 febbraio 1840) e Maria di Rohan (20 novembre 1843).
L'esame della corrispondenza di Donizetti in questo periodo non mi dette nessuna indicazione. Mi decisi d'intitolare la mia revisione : Zwei Sätze aus einer Symphonie in E (unvollständig überliefertes Spätwerk) von Gaetano Donizetti[22].
I lavori pratici dell'edizione mi occuparano molto tempo, sicché fu soltanto nel 1978 che potei concentrarmi sulla genesi della sinfonia partendo da due nuovi punti di vista. Prima domando alla *Bibliothèque Nationale* un esame della carta del manoscritto. Secondo mi lancio alla ricerca di reminiscenze dei motivi principali.

La carta oblunga , di circa 290 x 387 mm per pagina, con 24 pentagrammi, presentava filigrane ben chiare con uno stemma con corona e croce, un nome: *A.GRIFFON*, un luogo: *WIZERNES* e una data: *1839*. Wizernes è una località dove ancora oggi si produce della carta. Si trova vicino a Saint-Omer nel dipartimento del *Pas-de-Calais*. Questi elementi mi davano conferma del periodo e del luogo della stesura della partitura. Vedremo poi che l'esame delle carte impiegate da Donizetti negli ultimi anni della sua attività musicale permette delle conclusioni chiare su altri argomenti.
Prima di lanciarmi sulle tracce dei temi dell'*Adagio* e del *Minuetto*, cerco d'immaginare una riduzione all'essenziale della partitura. L'Adagio non poteva derivare di un'aria, neanche il Minuetto avvicinarsi ad un balletto. La polifonia era chiaramente di quattro voci al minimo, e per niente pianistica. Decisi di studiare, a titolo di paragone, i quartetti per archi di Donizetti e comincio dall'ultimo (il diciottesimo) in mi minore[23], composto a Napoli nel 1836. L'edizione, a cura di Guido Zavadini, mi mise immediatamente davanti ad un'evidenza finora sconosciuta : l'*Adagio* e il *Minuetto* per orchestra presentavano sostanzialmente la stessa musica che quella dei tempi centrali del diciottesimo quartetto per archi. Era una strumentazione arricchita in tal modo che la versione quartettistica sembra adesso un abbozzo. Un'analisi dettagliata delle relazioni fra le due opere non mi parve allora utile, perché l'edizione di Zavadini è colma di sbagli. Decisi di procurarmi delle riproduzioni dei documenti conservati alla Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Napoli.

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[20] Centenaire de Gaetano Donizetti, catalogue bibliographique de la section française à l'exposition de Bergame, dressé et publié par Charles Malherbe (n° 32)
[21] "Donizetti", Cassell, Londra 1965
[22] C. F. Peters, Francoforte
[23] Cat. Zav. 268

Diary

London, Barbican Centre, Opera Rara
***Il paria* (Donizetti) 8 June 2019 (concert perf)**

Rossini Festival, Wildbad
Konigliches Kurtheater
***L'accademia di Musica* (Mayr) 12/20/26 July**
***I tre Gobbi* (Manuel Garcia) 13/19/27 July**
Trinkhalle
***Emma di Resburgo* (Meyerbeer) 19/26 July**
***Corradino* aka *Mathilde di Shabran* (Rossini) 18/21/27 July**

Albuquerque, Opera Southwest
***Ali Baba* (Bottesini) 20/25/27 October**
(Cond. Anthony Barrese) First modern staging



Boston, Odyssey Opera
***Maria regina d'Inghilterra* (Pacini) 1/3 November**
***Elisabetta regina d'Inghilterra* (Rossini) 13/15 March 2020**
(fully staged performances)

Vienna, Theater an der Wien
***La Vestale* (Spontini) 16 November**
(w. Van der Heever, Spyres Cond. De Billy)
***Halka* (Moniusko) 15 December**
(w. Beczala, Winter Cond. Borowicz)

Donizetti Festival, Bergamo
Teatro Sociale
***Pietro il Grande Kzar delle Russie* 15 November/1 December**

Teatro Donizetti
***L'ange de Nisida* 16/21 November**

Cantiere del Teatro Donizetti
***Lucrezia Borgia* 22/24/30 November**

Sta Maria Maggiore
***Messa di Gloria* 29 November**

Paris, Opéra (Palais Garnier)
***Il pirata* (Bellini) 16/19 December (concert perfs)**
(w. Spyres, Radvanosky, Tézier Cond. Frizza

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

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