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# *A dramma sacro?*

**Timing is everything where opera is concerned, and timing was especially crucial in the Naples of the primo Ottocento: operas commissioned by the Real Teatro S. Carlo for appearance in Lent were required by their *scrittura* (though not necessarily by the public) to have a sacred character. But Donizetti's *Il paria* had its prima on 12th January 1829 and Lent did not begin that year until March - so how on earth did the opera manage to flaunt so much ecclesiastical sounding music when it was not required to do so? Did he plunder his sacred scores to spark up a birthday gala for the heir to the throne! Surely not. And what a plot. Did Donizetti make a miscalculation? Performed in parallel with *L'esule di Roma* replete with its spectacular *lieto fine* - vocal discontent soon erupted about the choice of such a searing tale of murderous religious conflict and castes for a royal gala!**

**Thanks to the newly published *Carteggi e Documenti 1797-1830*[1] indeed we know that the marchese Felice Amati, Minister of the Interior, wrote to the Sopraintendente de'Teatri e Spettacoli[2] to protest the very next day after approval of the libretto of *Il paria* (on 8th January) "*...e vuole però che nelle simili ricorrenze, non si mettano in iscena rappresentazioni tragiche.*" And upon whose behalf was he complaining? Most plausibly the disgruntled prince who wanted a "happy birthday" on this starry occasion!**

**In the event, in spite of the rebuke of the beloved marchese and the disapproval of its recipient the birthday opera went ahead and appeared six times, but was never revived.[3]**

**As regards the quality of the music all this is irrelevant, as its recent and most valid London performance makes clear *Il paria* is superb Donizetti. But it would not be the only time on that brilliant stage adjacent to the Royal Palace in the resplendent Southern city that an opera composed for a later staging had been moved forward arbitrarily ignoring the plans of its composer. It happened to Pacini more than once. Did it happen to Donizetti? Even though sanction for its performance was given at the very last moment the maestro had had all the time in the world to decide its**

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[1] *Gaetano Donizetti: Carteggi e Documenti 1797-1830* a cura di Paolo Fabbri. Fondazione Teatro Donizetti (Bergamo 2019) 761. Amati was writing to the Sopraintendente "*in Real Nome*"

[2] It is ironic that the Sopraintendente, the Duca di Carignano, was a family connection of Michele Carafa di Colobrano whose *Il paria* had failed so momentously at Venice three years before

[3] John Black *Donizetti's Operas in Naples 1822-1848*. The Donizetti Society (London 1982) pp23/61/A.10

**literary source, that is, he had begun writing *Il paria* in September 1828 and wrote to Mayr "*Io scrivo il Paria di Casimir de la Vigne*"[4] which gave him more than enough time to write two operas!**



**Casimir Delavigne 1793-1843**

***L'esule di Roma* too, earlier, had been shunted around and even extended reluctantly when commissioned as a one-act offering for the birthday of the mother of the unhappy prince. Ashbrook says little about *Paria's* genesis and we can only deduce its timetable. Does the *scrittura* survive somewhere? Who knows? But the opinion of the composer that this masterly opera was worth two *Castelli di Kenilworth* was justified at the Barbican in June, as the awaited recording will confirm. Was it initially intended to be a fervent Lenten blockbuster? We can only guess.** Alexander Weatherson

[4] *Carteggi* op cit 743. Letter of 27 September 1828



# IL PARIA

MELODRAMMA IN DUE ATTI

DA RAPPRESENTARSI

NEL REAL TEATRO DI S. CARLO

La sera del dì 12. Gennajo 1829.

NACCENDOSI IL FAUSTO GIORNO NATALIZIO

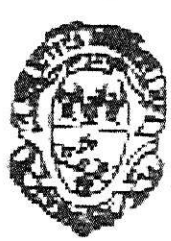
DI

SUA ALTEZZA REALE

IL PRINCIPE EREDITARIO

D. FERDINANDO

DUCA DI CALABRIA.





Napoli,

Dalla Tipografia Flautina

1829

# A Rare Pair of Pariahs

Who would have thought that it would be possible to hear two different and very rare operas in the same month, each to librettos based on the same play of 1821 'Le paria' by Casimir Delavigne? But that is what happened in June 2019. The first was Donizetti's *Il paria* given as a concert performance on June 8th at the Barbican, London, following recording sessions for Opera Rara CDs scheduled for release next year. The second was Stanislaw Moniuszko's *Paria* staged in Poznań on June 28th 2019 is the bicentenary of Moniuszko's birth and the 150th anniversary of the Warsaw premiere of *Paria* (I hope readers will bear with me discussing an opera that is a little later than our usual period). After six performances in 1829 Donizetti's opera fell out of sight, though the composer re-used its music in at least five later works from *Il diluvio universale* to *Le Duc d'Albe*. Until now its only revival has been in Faenza in 2001, a very modest performance captured live on Bongiovanni CDs. Moniuszko's opera also fell from the repertoire after a mere six outings. It was revived in Warsaw in 1917, then occasionally in various Polish cities between 1951 and 2008 the last of which (Castle Opera in Szczecin) was recorded by the Polish label Dux – an excellent performance but alas no longer generally available - though copies do turn up on various Amazon sites if at some very silly prices. A performance in Havana in 1991 may well be the only one outside Poland.

Delavigne's play tells of the ill-fated love between Néala and Idamore in 16th century India. She is the daughter of Akébar, High Priest of the Brahmins; he is leader of the army, but unknown to anyone he is also the son of Zarès, a member of the untouchable caste of Pariahs. Akébar celebrates Idamore's military victory by announcing that Idamore will marry Néala – a move that is also designed to curb Idamore's power and consolidate that of the Brahmins and in particular Akébar's. Zarès, looking for his son, interrupts the wedding of Idamore and Néala, thus trespassing on the Brahmins' sacred space and when Idamore, protecting his father, reveals himself as Zarès' son, he is promptly killed onstage by Akébar. Néala then adopts Zarès as her father, renouncing Akébar, and Néala and Zarès are banished. (These four characters become Neala, Idamor, Akebar and Dżares in Moniuszko's opera, Neala, Idamore, Akebare and Zarete in Donizetti's.)

Jan Chęciński's libretto for Moniuszko adheres to this dénouement. In contrast, Domenico Gilardoni's for Donizetti has Idamore and Zarete condemned to death and Neala longing for the same fate. There is another difference of emphasis between the two operas: the title character in Donizetti is Zarete, a baritone role, but in Moniuszko it is Idamor, a tenor. Dżares



appears, but doesn't sing in the prologue to Moniuszko's opera, only becoming a vocal force toward the end of the second of the following three acts whereas Zarete appears, sings and dominates throughout Donizetti's opera.

Gilardoni's text for *Il paria* is supposedly based on that written by Gaetano Rossi for the Paris-based composer Michele Enrico Carafa, whose opera, now sadly lost, was staged in Venice in 1826. A year later Delavigne's play inspired a ballet scenario by Salvatore Taglioni (Milan, 1827) and as late as 1872, also in Milan, it emerged again as *Il Pária*, a melodrama in tre atti by Stefano Interdonato to music by Giuseppe Burgio di Villafiorita.

There is a structural curiosity in Moniuszko's opera. It begins with an orchestral prelude and Prologue in which Idamore confides to his friend Ratef that he loves Neala and then defends a pariah who has entered the sacred grove from attack by an angry crowd. This pariah is of course Dżares, though neither father nor son recognises each other. Then follows the Overture! This is a splendid piece lasting ten minutes. It starts with a dramatic opening fast section and is followed by a glorious lyrical second (and main) theme that immediately lodged in my memory:




My introduction to *Paria* was through this overture on a Naxos CD of Moniuszko overtures,

though I should point out that this version is in an edition by Grzegorz Fitelberg, who in addition to re-orchestrating it, has recomposed some passages so that it sound like a late romantic piece. The Dux recording of the complete opera has Moniuszko's original. Both versions are wonderful. The main theme recurs, speeded up as the final section of the duet for Idamor and Dżares that ends Act II. Far too good to waste and still absolutely convincing at its new tempo.

The rest of *Paria* is also very fine; the opera doesn't deserve its neglect. Compared with *Halka* and *The Haunted Manor* (Moniuszo's two best known works) there is an absence of Polish dance rhythms, so it doesn't have an overtly Polish flavour. It doesn't have an Indian flavour either, which contemporary critics held against it. There are reminders of earlier French, German and Italian operatic styles – Moniuszko studied in Germany, travelled to Paris, met Liszt in Weimar, and Italian singers with their Italian repertoire habitually stopped off in Poland on their way to lucrative Russian engagements. I'm not qualified to say if its melodies are based on Polish folksong. Moniuszko (1819 to1872) is accepted as the most important Polish composer between Chopin and Szymanowski, though I think it is a mistake to see him as a link between these two as his music sounds like neither of them. Perhaps the best way I have to characterise *Paria* is to say that it sounds European. There are set numbers, but most of these flow into following music so the effect is of a through-composed opera. One curiosity: when Idamore is killed he dies – every other operatic hero I can think of sings first, sometimes at considerable length! And the silence of his death is filled by the comparatively trite off-stage wedding music, an effect similar to that at the end of *Un ballo in maschera* where the ballroom music offstage continues after the murder of Riccardo/Gustavus.

Donizetti's *Il paria* also deserves to be better known. The subject obviously fired Donizetti's imagination and he responded with some impassioned declamation, subtle orchestration and structural innovations. Neither act ends with a full ensemble, the first sees a duet for Idamore and Zarete, the second a quartet for the four principals. The cavatina of Neala's entrance aria, in which she relates her terrifying dream in which an asp has chained her to a Pariah, unusually ends, as well as starts, in the minor key (G minor, shades of Pamina). Donizetti thought highly of his work and wrote to his teacher Simon Mayr *"Between ourselves, I wouldn't give away a single piece of Paria for the whole of Il castello di Kenilworth ... "* his next serious opera.

The Opera Rara performance did *Il paria* proud. Sir Mark Elder brought all his usual attributes to bear – orchestral and choral precision, care over instrumental textures, the proper balance between forward dramatic thrust and accommodation of his singers. I have just one regret: there were many (to my mind) ugly blunt endings where I think appoggiaturas are necessary. I



know Elder disagrees, but I hear their lack as wrong notes. Neala was taken by Albina Shagimuratova. I thought her in more rounded full-bodied voice than in the recent Opera Rara recording of *Semiramide* and she commanded both the dramatic and virtuosic aspects of the role. The latter are perhaps a bit muted for a role originally sung by Adelaide Tosi as though Donizetti was deliberately avoiding anything that could be described as showy – this is a heroine without a big aria finale. Zarete was the baritone Misha Kiria, definitely someone to watch out for, in a part originally sung by Luigi Lablache. If we think of Lablache as more of a bass (he created Don Pasquale and Giorgio in Bellini's *I puritani*) Zarete provides proof of his extended range and dramatic powers. Marko Mimica was suitably implacable in giving voice to the ugly fanaticism of Akebare. Kathryn Rudge and Thomas Atkins did well in their small parts. Which leaves René Barbera as Idamore, a role originally sung by Rubini. Incredibly, he had stepped into the part at a week's notice and so deserves great thanks for saving the show. He displayed an attractive timbre, phrased sensitively and nailed the runs pretty well. His aria is peppered with high notes and trills. If Barbera omitted the latter, he did encompass the Cs and above. Of course none of us know how exactly how Rubini sounded, though no doubt we all have our own ideas. The mixed voice adopted by Barbera seemed to me to be too detached from the middle of his voice – my mental image of Rubini's voice is something much more seamless. But nonetheless it was a good deal more than just a brave attempt and the audience showed its appreciation in the final applause. There were splendid contributions from both the Britten Sinfonia and the Opera Rara chorus, roughly a third of which are members of the English National Opera chorus.

The Poznań *Paria* was quite a different experience. My Polish friends received an email roughly two weeks before the performance saying that the opera was not going to be performed in the opera house but in the Sports Arena and the audience was told to expect to stand for the duration and wear casual clothes. I had feared something of the sort when I noticed that the director was going to Graham Vick. Those familiar with his work with his Birmingham Opera Company will know that he aims to involve a large number of local people in the chorus and as extra actors. Thus we were in a modern dystopia with outcasts of every kind holding identifying placards; others were imprisoned in perspex cubes doing the same menial tasks for the duration of the opera; the soloists, chorus and actors moved through the audience forcing us to make way for them. When the dancers ended the ballet by splashing around in a swimming pool – don't ask - we had to retreat to avoid a drenching. The orchestra played on a raised platform which divided the circular arena into two segments – we spent the Prologue in the smaller of these (the orchestra incidentally started the Prelude before we had all got into it) and were corralled into the larger segment while the Overture was played. Audience

members took images on their phones and chattered during the music and a camera crew moved around seemingly rehearsing its filming for the live streaming of the second (and last) performance two days later. A sports scoreboard gave points to Akebar and Idamore, though I never worked out what generated these goals. I dare say that the extras found the whole experience exciting and rewarding and that the discussions in the rehearsal period raised worthwhile ideas about society, prejudice, injustice and totalitarianism. But it wasn't my idea of an operatic experience where the drama is carried, explained and deepened by the music. And I don't think my attitudes to society, prejudice, injustice and totalitarianism were challenged any more by being forced into a semi-participatory situation than they would have been had I sat in the auditorium of the Poznań opera house. The actual sound, though amplified, wasn't as poor as I feared though aural perspectives were distorted by the proximity or otherwise of individual singers. But musically I felt short-changed. There were so many distractions the music didn't have a chance. And I couldn't see the singers at some points, crucially the end of the opera with the banishment of Dżares and Neala, which meant the drama also didn't have a chance.

Idamor was sung by Dominik Sutowicz, a dramatic tenor better suited to the forceful parts of his role than to the lyrical portions. The small role of his companion, Ratef, was taken lyrically by Pavlo Tolstoy. Strangely, he projected better – I always find it unsettling when the thought arises that perhaps the *primo tenore* and the *comprimario* could profitably exchange roles. But Sutowicz sustained his demanding part well. Neala was sung by Monika Mych-Nowicka, Akebar by Szymon Kobyliński, Dżares by Mikołaj Zalasiński and the small part of a Priestess by Aleksandra Pokora. All were good. There was excellent singing and playing from the Poznań Opera House chorus and orchestra under the direction of Gabriel Chmura. The programme contains a short essay on the opera's music by Chmura, longer ones by Vick on his aims and methods and a full background essay taking in Delavigne and Donizetti as well as Moniuszko by Piotr Urbański from which I have taken some of the above.

The performance of Moniuszko's Paria of June 30th is available on YouTube (search 'Paria Poznan Opera') for those more in tune than me with this style of performance – you will have gathered that I think the opera itself is well worth investigating. The studio recording of Donizetti's *Il paria* by Opera Rara is scheduled for release in Spring 2020.

**Alan Jackson**







Stanislaw Moniuszko

**THE ITINERANT MELOMANE**

# *THE BELLE OF BOSTON*

Boston, among America's big cities, for a long time was not considered an "opera town." A first class symphony and great chamber music and recitals—yes. But not opera. Maybe it was the proximity to New York, the theory ran. That is not true any more. Any town that can present, on the same night, a rare Steffani baroque opera in an extraordinarily fine production and one of Offenbach's rarely done operatic satires is an opera town in my book. That's what happened the other night (June 14) when the Boston Early Music Festival was presenting Steffani's *Orlando* at the Cutler Majestic, and a few blocks away Odyssey Opera was performing Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* at the Huntington Avenue Theatre.

Odyssey Opera is a relative new-comer, formed by Artistic Director Gil Rose with the strong financial support of Randolph J. Fuller from the ashes of Opera Boston after the sudden collapse of that company in 2012. They seem to have settled on thematic seasons. This year, the first half of the season celebrated the 200th anniversary of Gounod's birth with lesser known works by that composer—*La Reine de Saba* and *Le Médicin Malgré Lui*, followed by operas on the theme of Helen of Troy—Gluck's *Paride e Elena*, Strauss' *Die Ägyptische Helena* and Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène*. Next season will offer six operas around the theme of "The Tudors": Saint-Saëns' *Henry VIII*, Pacini's *Maria, Regina d'Inghilterra*, Rosner's *The Chronicle of Nine* (a world premiere), Rossini's *Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra*, Britten's *Gloriana* and Edward German's *Merrie England.* Since the first season (2013-2014) not a single opera presented has been a frequently performed standard repertory piece. Obviously, Odyssey Opera intends to educate and promote repertory—old and new—that is unknown to most opera lovers.






The last of this season's works was *La Belle Hélène,* or *The Beautiful Helen,* since it was performed in a new English translation by Richard Duployen. Of Offenbach's 110 or so operas or operettas, this is one of several which are delicious satires aimed at the excesses of the Second Empire under the Emperor Napoleon III. In 1858 Offenbach had a huge success with *Orphée aux Enfers,* which satirized events and figures in his contemporary Paris through the guise of Greek myth, and now he and his librettists, Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy (the same pair who would write the libretto for *Carmen* a few years later), decided to recreate the success with another Greek myth/Second Empire satire, premiered in Paris at the Théâtre des Variétés on December 17, 1864.

The problem with performing these operas and operettas today is not the music—Offenbach is unfailingly tuneful and *La belle Hélène* boasts some of his most memorable melodies—but our unfamiliarity with the people and events he is satirizing. Not very many people today know much about the problems and people of Second Empire France (1852-70) under Napoleon III and his Spanish-born wife, the Empress Eugénie. Alas, it is also true that today fewer and fewer people know much about classical mythology. In Offenbach's day, almost everyone in the audience had studied ancient myth and literature, and they certainly understood the jokes around the story of Paris and Helen, and would have recognized the figures of Agamemnon, Menelaus, Orestes, Paris and Helen.

Offenbach also frequently uses musical parody to complement the political, sociaand literary satire. An "intelligence" contest in Act I is accompanied by music announcing the song contest from Wagner's *Tannhauser*, premiered in 1845 and performed in its revised Paris version only three years before *La belle Hélène*, in 1861. The finales of Acts I and II are both parodies of the Italian *concertato finale* as popularized by Rossini, Verdi and others—the second act finale occasioned by Menelaus catching Paris and Helen *in flagrante delicto*. A "patriotic trio" in the last act mimics the great patriotic trio from Rossini's *Guillaume Tell.* Dedicated opera lovers today might recognize these musical parodies, as would audiences of the 1860's, but most attendees will need to have them explained, just as they will need explanations of Second Empire follies and Greek myth in order to "get it."

Odyssey Opera tried to overcome these problems in Frank Kelley's clever production by placing it all in a Second Empire setting, with costumes mostly from that era (although a few were sort of ancient Greek and there were two evzones—those distinctive Greek guards one sees today outside the parliament in Athens) and scenery which recalled painterly views of France in the 1860's. The setting of Acts I and III looked like the beach at Trouville in a Boudin painting (although officially Act III is set on the beach at Nauplion, in Greece). There were also reproductions of actual paintings lowered into view (like Manet's 1863 "Olympia") and "recreations" on stage of Degas dancers and Manet's "Déjeuner sur l'herbe" complete with a female nude sitting at a picnic along side three well dressed men (Menelaus, Agamemnon and Calchas). The character of Menelaus was made up to look like Napoleon III, complete with goatee and long, twirled, waxed mustache, while Hélène was reminiscent of pictures and photos of Empress Eugènie. So there was a real attempt to place the farce in the Second Empire and visually to point out the satiric correspondences so that the mockery of corruption and loose morals in the Second Empire made sense, but who knows if most of the audience "got" it.

The story follows the myth of Paris and Helen, beginning after Paris has judged the beauty contest between Minerva, Venus and Juno and has been granted the love of the "most beautiful woman in the world," aka Helen, who unfortunately happens to be married to Menelaus, King of Sparta. The course of action follows Paris' seduction of Helen and the deception of

Menelaus, the greed of Calchas, the High Priest, here dressed as a Catholic clergyman complete with crucifix necklace. Oreste is a party boy (sung by a woman). Ajax 1 is complemented by Ajax 2 like Tweddledum and Tweedledee, sharing the same toga or bathing costume. Achilles is a pretty boy fitted out with special leg brace for his heel. The parody of these great heroes of Greek myth is itself an ancient tradition going back to the very origins of comedy, as Offenbach's very literate librettists certainly knew.

The new Duployen English translation of the libretto might have been funny (like Jeremy Sams' racy translation of *Orpheus in the Underworld*), but mostly it was unintelligible, at least when sung. And it was certainly more ponderous than the light, tripping French lyrics, and the sexy wit in Halévy and Meilhac's French, which so horrified Victorian critics across the Channel in England, did not come across. One might laugh at the farcical goings-on and the acting (which was often funny), but not so much at the satire, the parody or the wit.

Still, it was a fun and often well-sung evening. Best of all was the Hélène of Ginger Costa-Jackson. Her rich mezzo was as delightful as her stage presence, and she is pretty and young enough to bring off Helen. She carried off the over-the-top role with great panache in spite of a gown which would not zip up properly in Act II. The lower-voiced men were also quite good, and funny, especially Chalcas (Ben Wager), Agamemnon (David McFerrin) and Menelaus (Alan Schneider). Jaime Korkos as the partying, champagne-swilling Oreste was funny too. The minor characters (Stephen Goldstein, Ajax 1; Gregory Zavracky, Ajax 2; Christian Figueroa, Achilles; Mara Bonde, Bacchis; Felicia Gavilanes, Loena; Rachele Schmiege, Parthoenis) were all good. The weak link was Adam Fisher as Paris. He looked great (a young Alan Ladd, if you remember him), but his tenor could not really carry the day, especially in the higher register. His voice strikes me as more appropriate for musical comedy (perhaps miked) and his enchanting Act II couplets, "Je la vois, elle dort" requires high, soft singing; neither it nor the love duet "C'est le ciel qui m'envoie" came off as well as they should have. Likewise, the refrain of his Act I song describing the Judgment of Paris, which requires leaps up to B flat on the word "Evohé" (!)



Fisher and Costa-Jackson



Gil Rose directed the 30-strong the orchestra, which kept those seductive waltzes and comic arias going. A surprise highlight was the men's patriotic trio "Lorsque la Grèce est un champ de carnage" in Act III, neatly sung, perfectly choreographed and delightfully funny. Marjorie Folkman did the choreography; Brooke Stanton was Costume Designer; Janie Howland was Scenic Designer and Karen Perlow did the lighting. All in all, it was a delightful evening. Now if I could just get those Offenbach tunes out of my head!

**Charles Jernigan**

One of our members has alerted us that

**CICERONI TRAVEL**

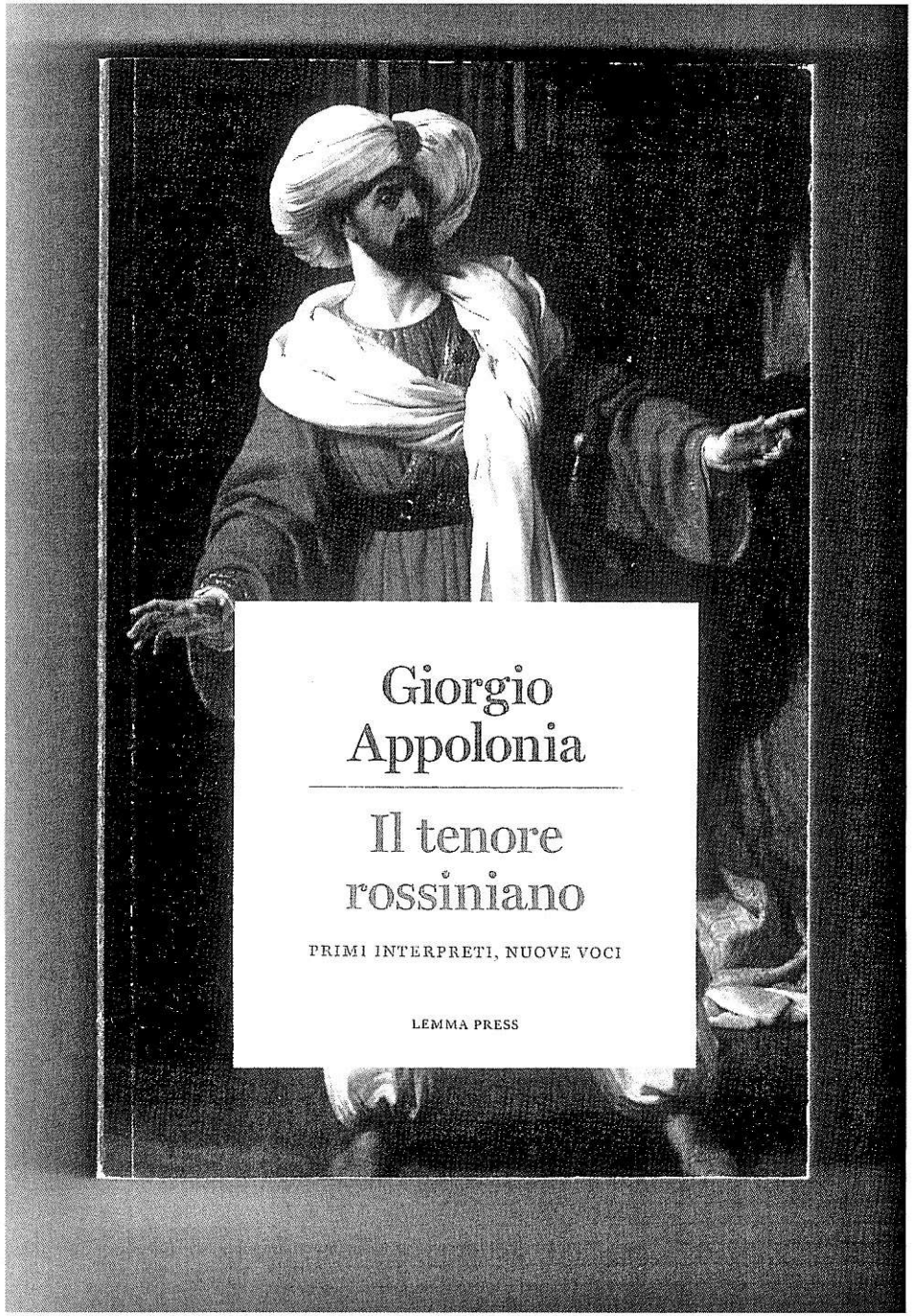
is proposing an organised tour to the 2020 Bergamo Donizetti Festival over the weekend of 18 – 22 November2020.

See their website

www.ciceroni.co.uk

for further details (though at the time of writing the price is yet to be announced)

Please note that this is purely for information – the Donizetti Society has no link with Ciceroni Travel






Book review

# Il tenore rossiniano

## by Giorgio Appolonia

There was a time – not so very long ago after all - when the idea of a tenor whose range of vocalism depended upon one single composer would have made vocal fanatics collapse into gales of laughter - if not total disbelief (*pace* the legendary Wagnerian *heldentenor* of yore, evidence for whose tangible existence many people have searched in vain) but for several recent decades the *Rossinian* tenor has won all the up-market applause, captivating operagoers with extraordinary high notes and a timbre like that of Juan Diego Flórez or Michael Spyres, with a legacy of long queues at the box office and a fanbase devoted to a high, refined, rather etiolated register at the very top of the stave, putting "*can belto*" back into its can and referring the Verdian bellow back to the stockyard from which it should never have strayed.

But when did this brilliant voice actually emerge? Or more truthfully reappear? I can rely only upon my own recollections: wasn't it at Pesaro with Chris Merritt and Rocky Blake? Voices that made the La Scala *loggionisti* squeal in dismay? But the Rossinian tenor has roots far deeper in the operatic psyche than any such nostalgic memories; he came with Rossini and his contemporaries in the first place and came back to us - logically enough - when Rossini came back to us.

Giorgio Appolonia has gone into all this with names and dates in his important book. He lists all the *primi interpreti*: Domenico Mombelli, Raffaele Monelli, Eliodoro Bianchi, Claudio Bonoldi and so on - a fabled contingent from the distant past with the details of their various ranges and their incredible repertoire; Serafino Gentili, Luigi Mari and Giovanni David whose on-stage portrayal, singing a major role by Giovanni Pacini (and not by Rossini at all) features on the front cover!

But all this is the unique research material to be expected of this author. As in the past the "Rossinian" nomenclature did not necessarily condemn the fish and fowl of the tenor clef to extinction, the *baritenore* had its champions Andrea Nozzari and Niccolò Tacchinardi for example for whom many of the surviving vocal masterworks of the late Rossinian era were conceived, as did the *contraltino,* but Giovanni-Battista Rubini proved to be *the* world favourite in the wake of Rossini with his seductively rounded accents that captured attention of composers Europewide, it was his incomparable high register, his seamless *falsettone* that permanently dampened the handkerchiefs in the boxes.

Printed in Bergamo – City of tenors. Divided into two major sections, 'Primi Interpreti" and "Nuove voci", this is a comprehensive biographical guide to past and present Rossinian tenorial superstars - something no historically-minded scholar, critic or vocal enthusiast can do without. An up-to-date handbook, the quantity of research material verges on the fabulous, mesmerising the reader with forgotten names in a litany of past glory. Do you want or need to know what Rossini operas Domenico Donzelli sang, and where and when? You have a complete list. Nozzari's career at the S. Carlo is quite tantalising, its range surprising. Did you know that Manuel Garcia sang in London? He sang there extensively, in tandem with Paris, going on to New York and Mexico before terminating his Rossinian parabola at the Théâtre Italien. All his roles detailed in fascinating succession.

Apart from a few names of recent poignant lost decades - people like Ugo Benelli and Luigi Alva of affecting memory - for most of our readers it will be the Nuove voci that passes the test of everyday usefulness. Names appearing on current favourite CD's or on the precious recordings on everyone's shelves that here find a page or two to themselves. People who want to know about Dmitry Korchak, Gregory Kunde, John Irvin, William Matteuzzi, Francesco Meli, Salvatore Fisichella, Bogdan Mihai, Maxim Miranov, Edgardo Rocha, Surgey Romanovsky, Giuseppe Sabbatini, Antonio Siragusa and so on, artists who are questioned about their roles and their position in the Rossinian canon. We have an up-to-date-scan of today's voices - of necessity a fragmentary discussion - but truly revealing. Read the views of Flórez for example. Their answers form a valuable guide to the future evolution of such an esoteric yet not simply fashionable vocal category in full flow.

There is a *Bibliografia Essenziale*, many truly specific career details, some quirks I won't go into, a very few omissions – however could it be otherwise, and an Index. A real vade mecum.

**Alexander Weatherson**

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# UNA REGINA TURCA: LEYLA GENCER

Fulvio Stefano Lo Presti

Ero ancora un ragazzetto quando, nel volgere di pochi mesi, vidi e ascoltai la NORMA di Anita Cerquetti al Teatro Bellini di Catania e IL TROVATORE di Leyla Gencer alla Televisione. Anni dopo, ormai avviato agli studi universitari, fui spettatore a Napoli del formidabile ROBERTO DEVEREUX sancarliano della Gencer. Non esisteva allora, per nostra fortuna, soltanto Maria Callas! Ma la cantatrice turca di madre polacca, allieva di Giannina Arangi Lombardi, se nel corso della caleidoscopica carriera ebbe fama e fortuna, non le ottenne certo in proporzione pari agli straordinari talenti dimostrati. L' "aurea" mediocrità dei reggitori della Scala la mantenne per quanto possibile ai margini dei loro cartelloni mentre l'indifferenza delle case discografiche le precluse i propri solchi, lasciando semmai alla discografia parallela, tra pirata e live, l'onere di conservarne memorie sonore. Artista assai più audace, versatile e intraprendente della Callas, Leyla Gencer (Istanbul 1928 – Milano 2008), forte di una tecnica fuori dal comune e di un'ammirevole intelligenza interpretativa, ha offerto un contributo inestimabile alla riscoperta e rivalutazione del primo Verdi e del Donizetti alternativo, restituendo, su altro versante, lustro e prestigio a opere quali ELISABETTA REGINA D'INGHILTERRA di Rossini, BEATRICE DI TENDA di Bellini e SAFFO di Pacini.[1]

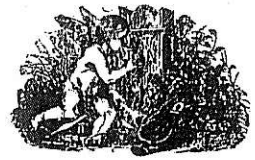
La consorella donizettiana Franca Cella, milanese di stirpe piacentina e tra i pionieri della renaissance donizettiana assieme al marito Lorenzo Arruga, è dagli anni Sessanta impegnata a fornire contributi ragguardevoli su vari aspetti della cultura operistica, in particolare nel campo della librettistica. A lei si deve LEYLA GENCER. ROMANZO VERO DI UNA PRIMADONNA (CGS Edizioni, Venezia 1986), che adesso, riveduto ed ampliato, è disponibile in versione inglese: LEYLA GENCER. THE STORY OF A PRIMADONNA. Nell'elegante traduzione di Kathryn Lake, il volume è apparso l'anno scorso presso le Edizioni Bolis di Azzano San Paolo (Bergamo). La prima versione era stata recensita da Ralph Wells nella "Newsletter 41" (1987).
Le 550 pagine si impongono sin dalla densità del contenuto e dalla pregevole iconografia, degnamente introdotte da una Leyla in duplice regalità sulla copertina: nella CORNARO di Donizetti. A parte la documentazione preziosa di lettere, colloqui, interviste e recensioni, il merito essenziale del volume consiste nell'avere destramente schivato le sirene dell'agiografia e della passione nostalgica e

[1] "After *Lucia di Lammermoor, Anna Bolena* (1957), *Poliuto* (1961) Maria Callas' exploration into Donizetti came to a halt, Leyla took over and continued... " (p. 276).





intransigente del tipico fan sempre in agguato. Amica fraterna della grande cantante, l'autrice non si autorizza per questo a farsene una complice indulgente.
Tra le quinte di una carriera e di un'esistenza, l'esposizione si snoda varia, animata, vivace dalle origini di Leyla in Turchia fino all'epilogo nella "sua" Milano, che però non ha avuto diritto alle sue ceneri (né le avrebbe meritate).
Una vita straordinaria la sua, disseminata di conoscenze, amicizie, incontri tra i più stimolanti, non soltanto nell'ambito dell'arte lirica. Sul suo cammino cantanti dal passato glorioso, come i suoi maestri la Arangi Lombardi e Apollo Granforte, artisti della sua generazione, promesse di quella successiva, alle quali poi ha ben volentieri trasmesso le sue esperienze. Grandi direttori l'hanno affiancata, in particolare Tullio Serafin, Vittorio Gui, Gianandrea Gavazzeni. Fu quest'ultimo – anche tanti agguerriti donizettiani non lo sospettavano – a indirizzare la Gencer alla scoperta di ROBERTO DEVEREUX nel 1964 al San Carlo di Napoli, facendo sì che il nome della primadonna turca fosse indissolubilmente legato a una delle tappe fondamentali della renaissance donizettiana. Tre anni dopo a Firenze la Gencer rilanciò prepotentemente MARIA STUARDA con una rivale d'alto rango (erano entrambe regine): Shirley Verrett.
Alla Scala avevano fatto il pensierino (solo un pensierino) di riprendere il DEVEREUX, il quale invece aspetta ancora di ritornare a Milano (anzi è dal 1839 che aspetta, quando alla Scala lo diedero per 38 sere). Del resto, benché lombardo, a Donizetti Milano non riserva la business class bensì l'economy e ormai da 52 sere di Sant'Ambrogio la Scala non ha più aperto i battenti con un'opera del Bergamasco.[2] Il che è semplicemente scandaloso!
Che ci resta di Leyla Gencer, oltre alle tante registrazioni fortunosamente conservate? Il fascino irresistibile di una diva autentica con la sua elegante semplicità e l'irresistibile sorriso smagliante: l'umile ancella del Genio creator…[3]
Il volume di Franca, che ci trasmette questa immagine avvincente e veritiera, si legge avidamente come un romanzo, ma è un'enciclopedia, completa di indici, cronologia, discografia, bibliografia, ecc.



[2] L'ultima inaugurazione donizettiana di una stagione della Scala risale infatti al 7 dicembre 1967 quando andò in scena *Lucia di Lammermoor*, diretta da Claudio Abbado e con protagonisti Renata Scotto e Gianni Raimondi.
[3] La Gencer cantò *Adriana Lecouvreur* di Cilea al San Carlo di Napoli nel 1966.





**BEL CANTO FESTIVAL IN BAD WILDBAD:**

# TANCREDI and ALTERNATIVE ARIAS CONCERT

Every year bel canto soars in the Black Forest of Germany, in the little spa town of Bad Wildbad, where Rossini came to take the waters long after he had stopped composing operas. Rossini in Wildbad has for several years widened its scope beyond the master from Pesaro and performs works by his contemporaries as well. For the opera lover in search of "new" works from the early nineteenth century, Wildbad is the place to come. This year's offerings include *Tancredi, Corredino* (the original Rome edition of the opera that later came to be known as *Matilde di Shabran*), Meyerbeer's first Italian opera, *Romilda e Costanza,* Mayr's *L 'accademia di musica,* Garcia's *I tre gobbi,* and various concerts.

## TANCREDI

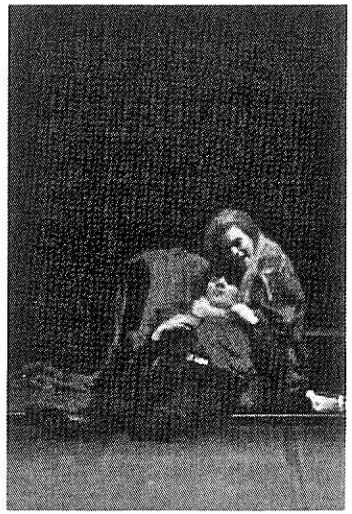
FERRARA EDITION OF MARCH 21, 1813
Libretto by Gaetano Rossi; Final Scene by Luigi Lechi
Music by Gioachino Rossini
Conductor: Antonino Fogliani
Stage Director: Joachim Schönleber
Costumes: Martin Warth
Tancredi: Diana Haller
Amenaide: Elisa Balbo
Argirio: Patrick Kabongo
Orbazzano: Ugo Guagliardo
Isaura: Diletta Scandiuzzi
Roggiero: Claire Gascoin
Górecki Chamber Choir
Passionart Orchestra, Krakow

*Tancredi,* Rossini's breakout hit from 1813 is the only really well known opera among this year's Wildbad offerings. As all Rossini fans know, the story of the Syracusan knight and his love for Amenaide, daughter of Argirio, ruler of Syracuse, debuted in Venice, but soon moved to Ferrara, where Rossini replaced the happy ending with a tragic finale, more suitable to the plot and faithful to Voltaire's play, the source of the opera. The composer made other changes for Ferrara, principally by suppressing Argirio's Act II tenor aria and adding choral material which is needed for the tragic finale. There is even a third revision by the composer, made for Milan, with happy ending restored, and Rossini continued to tinker with the score for years, giving modern impresarios a choice of "authentic" editions and added arias for modern performances. In our day the tragic finale (Ferrara score), which came to light in the 1970's and was edited by Phillip Gossett (and championed by Marilyn Horne), has taken precedent, although one occasionally sees the original Venice version or admixtures with various emendations.

The Wildbad production, however, adhered strictly to the score which musicologist have

determined was heard in Ferrara, without any changes from other versions or additions, and it may have been the first time in the modern era when the Ferrara score was performed just as Rossini would have heard it in 1814. That meant cutting the great tenor aria from Act II, although Patrick Kabongo, the Argirio, could have sung it splendidly (many tenors will not attempt it because of its vocal hurdles).

The production, by Jochen Schönleber, shared with the new Royal Opera Festival of Krakow, Poland, was dark and simple, and, of course, updated as a contemporary fantasy (a production set in the time specified by the librettist is as rare in Germany as a snowstorm during the awful heat wave which coincided with the Wildbad performances). The bars of a prison stood at the rear of the stage in the tiny Königliches Kurtheater while the empty foreground had tables and chairs as needed. The male chorus was dressed in either black leather or trench coats with sunglasses, dated and cliched costuming to be sure. Schönleber's stage direction, however, was often effective: for once the lovers came across as the teenagers they were probably meant to be and their angry encounter in Act I, when Tancredi thinks that Amenaide has been unfaithful, was handled very well, coming perilously close to a physical fight. On the other hand, fussy stage action during Tancredi's famous entrance aria and cabaletta ("Di tanti palpiti"), fit neither the words nor the music. The final, tragic tableau, with Tancredi's death over Rossini's shockingly minimalist score, was superb, however. The tableau of Amenaide cradling the dying knight in her arms as Argirio knelt nearby and the light fade was a Michelangelesque Pietà.



Haller and Balbo

Mezzo soprano Diana Haller was a wonderful Tancredi. She has a beautiful, full, rounded voice with great range and effortless coloratura, and she is a good actress. I am a veteran of



many Tancredi death scenes, going back to The Great Horne herself, and Haller gave the best one I have seen. The small, intimate theater helped, no doubt, but It was Haller's ability to sing with diminishing volume as she breathed her last, and still be clearly heard, which made the scene work so well. It was the first time I have ever seen the opera performed with the tragic ending when the final scene was not something of an anti-climax. Here it was exactly what it was meant to be—deeply moving. The audience held their applause for almost a minute afterwards before the cheers began. When the shockingly simple tragic ending failed with the 1814 Ferrara audience, which certainly expected something more rousing, Rossini scrapped it and returned to a happy wrap-up. He never tried something so radical, so modern, so avant-garde again, but this performance proved that his masterly touch was not a mistake—just 200 years ahead of its time.

Equally good was Patrick Kabongo as the aged father Argirio. The tenor, who started off in a church choir in Kinshasa (Congo), has sung often in Wildbad. His clear, incisive tenor, strong from top to bottom, with spot on high notes has all the agility needed for Rossini. Also good were Ugo Guagliardo, Diletta Scandiuzzi and Claire Gascoin. I have some reservations about Elisa Balbo as Amenaide. She has the requisite vocal agility and good stage presence, but her soprano is fairly thin and a little reedy for the role. The orchestra (with about 25 players) was well led by Antonino Fogliani and he managed fine balance in the small hall (about 125 seats), where it could easily have overwhelmed the singers.



Balbo as Amenaide

Altogether an admirable performance, in parts truly great

# ARIE ALTERNATIVE

In the evening we attended an exciting performance of some 16 arias and scenas which Rossini composed as alternatives for his operas. The reasons for "arie alternative" are many—the request of a star singer, adjustments for the vocal capacities or individual talents of a singer or simply to find a more effective vocal solution for subsequent productions.

The arias, sometimes with chorus or interventions from other singers, were performed by several of the main Festival artists, with chorus and orchestra. They came from *L'inganno*

*felice, La pietra del paragone, L'Italiana in Algeri, Matilde di Sharon, Sigismondo, Trovando e Dorliska, La gazza ladra, Armida, Eduardo e Cristina, Maometto II* and *Semiramide.* Many years ago Marilyn Horne issued a vinyl disc of Rossini Alternative Arias, and over the years some have been programed in recitals and cds. However, I had not heard most of them before, and several were specially commissioned by the Deutsche Rossini Gesellschaft (German Rossini Society) as performing editions.

The Festival soloists included Silvia Dalla Benetta, Diana Haller, Victoria Yarovaya, Francisco Brito, César Cortés, Emmanuel Franco, David Oller, Ricardo Seguel and Shi Zong. José Miguel Pérez-Sierra led the Passionart Orchestra Krakow and the Górecki Chamber Choir. This is certainly a fascinating corner of Rossini studies. Every time you think you have him covered, musicologists turn up new works…



# MEYERBEER INCOGNITA

The Wildbad Festival regularly unearths unknown gems from the early nineteenth century, in this case Giacomo Meyerbeer's first Italian opera…

ROMILDA E COSTANZA
MELODRAMA SEMISERIO IN TWO ACTS
PREMIERE: PADUA, JULY 19, 1817
LIBRETTO BY GAETANO ROSSI
MUSIC BY GIACOMO MEYERBEER
CONDUCTOR: LUCIANO ACOCELLA
PASSIONART ORCHESTRA KRAKOW
GÓRECKI CHAMBER CHOIR
TEOBALDO: PATRICK KABONGO
RETELLO: JAVIER POVEDANO
ROMILDA: CHIARA BRUNELLO
LOTARIO: CÉSAR CORTÉZ
COSTANZA: LUIZA FATYOL
ALBERTONE: EMMANUEL FRANCO
ANNINA: CLARA GASCOIN
PIEROTTO: GIULIO MASTROTOTARO
UGO: TIMOPHEY PAVLENKO

The young Meyerbeer, born Jacob Liebmann Beer in Berlin in 1791, began his promising career as a composer of operas in Germany, but when he traveled to Italy in 1816 to perfect his skills he was struck dumb at a performance of Rossini's *Tancredi* in Venice. From that point for many years he modeled his own work on the man he called a "Jupiter of Music." He Italianized his first name as "Giacomo" (he had already changed his last name in honor of a rich uncle to "Meyerbeer") and set out to write operas in the Rossini style. His first effort was *Romilda e Costanza*, a medieval fantasy of rivalry, twin brothers and an all's-well that-ends-well ending. As a completely unknown composer in Italy, he was willing to pay for the libretto himself, but when the impresario of the small theater in Venice he had induced to



produce his first Italian opera demanded that Meyerbeer pay all of the production costs, the composer moved the whole enterprise to Padua, where his troubles did not cease. The leading lady (Romilda) was to be mezzo-soprano Rosmunda Pisaroni, who would later gain fame in several Rossini operas. She became convinced that Meyerbeer had promised to marry her, and when he disabused her of the notion in no uncertain terms, she tried to sabotage the production by having friends among the singers and in the orchestra play and sing badly. There was also backstage turmoil around the Costanza, Caterina Liparini, who was having an affair with a young nobleman in the royal court. Even so, the opera was moderately successful at its premiere, and it was repeated in Milan, Florence and elsewhere. Meyerbeer's "Italian career" had begun and would continue with several operas—*Semiramide riconosciuta, Emma di Resburgo, Margarita d'Anjou, L'esule di Granata,* and the wildly successful *Il crociato in Egitto.* All of this came before Meyerbeer moved to Paris and became the architect of French Grand Opera.

*Romilda e Costanza* takes place in the realm of the princes of Province, where Teobaldo, the heir to the throne, is returning from a successful campaign against the dukes of Brittany. While there, he fell in love with Romilda, the daughter of the defeated duke. Costanza, daughter of Lotario, the Count of Sisteron has known him since childhood and believes that she should become the new Prince's wife—and thus she becomes Romilda's rival in love. Unbeknownst, Romilda and Teobaldo have actually married in Brittany, and she has followed him to Province disguised as a page. At home, Teobaldo's own twin brother Retello is a jealous rival, who plots to overthrow him and assume the throne himself. A sub-plot concerns Pierotto, Teobaldo's loyal retainer and foster brother, who marries Annina at the start of Act II. Through various intrigues Retello succeeds in overthrowing Teobaldo and is subsequently overthrown himself by loyalists led by Pierotto. In the end, Romilda and Teobaldo are united and the generous Teobaldo pardons everyone including the wicked Retello.

The music of this unknown score was alway melodious without being particularly memorable. Certainly Rossini stands over this score like an unseen colossus, although often Meyerbeer speaks in his own voice in the early formulation of a distinctive style. The overture is nice and the Trio "Oh come a quell'aspetto" is catchy, the only piece to enjoy a recording (on the Opera Rara label) as far as I know. Romilda has a splendid "Gran Scena" in Act II, "Ombre ferali della morte," accompanied by the bassoon. The semiserio nature of the score comes mostly from Pierotto, who is a jolly character whose wedding in Act II presents Meyerbeer with the opportunity for some genre pieces which are not associated with the plot, and which will become a feature of his grand operas in France.

The Wildbad Festival had originally planned to mount Auber's *Le philtre*, the source of *L'elisir d'amore*, but changed the plan to Meyerbeer's *Emma di Resburgo.* Plans shifted again when a usable score of *Romilda e Costanza* turned up, perhaps because it would indeed be the first performance in the modern era (a performance of *Emma di Resburgo* from Vienna is available on cd). One of the chief reasons for exhuming unknown material seems to be the production of a cd, and it helps if there is no rival recording.

Unfortunately, I did not find the concert performance of July 26 very compelling. The problems began with the two ladies. Luiza Fatyol (Costanza) was visibly pregnant and perhaps

tired because of her condition. Towards the end of the performance, she sat down and did not participate in the happy finaletto. She sounded a bit shrill too. Chiara Brunello, the contralto Romilda, sang so softly most of the time that it was like "marking" or singing at half voice. Occasionally she let loose with a loud and shrill high note, which contrasted startlingly to her generally low volume singing. Tenor Patrick Kabongo was good as always in the semi heroic role of Teobaldo, and the others were fine in their more minor roles, but it seemed to me that their hearts were not in it. The same forces which attended the other Wildbad performances this year were led by Luciano Acocella, but it did not seem well rehearsed. The principals and the chorus had their noses buried in heavy scores throughout, and there was very little attempt to interact or invest the words and music with meaning because everyone was so intent on getting the notes right. Even the phrasing seemed uneven. Luciano Acocella led the Passionart folks and the Gorécki Choir. One can sympathize with musicians struggling with an unknown score, but more familiarity with it through rehearsal should not be too much to expect, especially since the performance will presumably be immortalized in a recording.

The bottom line: it is always interesting to hear an unknown score by a major composer, but the opera awaits an adequate and committed performance before we will know whether it is worth reviving.

**Charles Jernigan**

# LA VERA AGNESE E LA FINTA ALAIDE *LA STRANIERA* DI BELLINI AL MAGGIO FIORENTINO

Fulvio Stefano Lo Presti

Secondo trionfo scaligero e quarto titolo del ventisettenne Bellini, *La Straniera* (14 febbraio 1829), sul libretto variamente apprezzato di Felice Romani, trae origine dal romanzo *L'Étrangère* (1825) dell'"ineffabile" visconte D'Arlincourt, che le contagia un ingannevole retroscena storico. Bandita da Filippo II di Francia (Augusto tanto per dire), non fu infatti l'amante tedesca Agnese di Merania (che ebbe l'agio di partorirgli tre figli), bensì la danese Ingeburge o Ingeborg (Isemberga) e all'indomani delle nozze. Quest'ultima dovette cedere il talamo ad Agnese, ma sopravvisse pur infelicemente ad entrambi, anziché precederli nella tomba come nella finzione. Prima infatti morì Agnese e poi il re. Della derelitta sorella del re di Danimarca - più verosimile come malvista *straniera* - non già di Agnese (Alaide), avrebbe potuto semmai muoversi a compassione e innamorarsene perdutamente il "frenetico" conte brettone Arturo, a tal punto da rifiutare la promessa sposa Isoletta malgrado i buoni uffici del barone Valdeburgo (fratello in incognito di Agnese). Viene in



ogni caso assicurata la trama del melodramma tragico, che ispirerà a Bellini <<l'opera più radicale, [...] più ardentemente romantica>> (John Rosselli), che, se è meno rigogliosa sotto il profilo lirico-melodico rispetto ai titoli belliniani più popolari, possiede un *appeal* motivico e una pregnanza drammaturgica peculiari che non mancarono di impressionare tanto Donizetti che Verdi. In Italia però *La Straniera* sembra vittima di una sorta di xenofobia: assai rare e non sempre memorabili sono le sue riprese. Oltralpe invece riappare un po' meno di rado. La Scala di Milano che la tenne a battesimo 190 anni fa si guarda bene dal rieseguirla (forse in attesa che si compiano i duecento anni?). L'ultima ripresa milanese, nel 1935, centenario della morte di Bellini, venne diretta da Gino Marinuzzi con Gina Cigna, Francesco Merli, Mario Basiola e Gianna Pederzini (*excusez du peu!*). Dagli anni Sessanta a oggi *La Straniera* è stata in ogni caso associata, pur sporadicamente, a prime donne maiuscole: da Renata Scotto a Montserrat Caballè, a Elena Suliotis, Renée Fleming, Carol Neblett, Editha Gruberova e Patrizia Ciofi.

Vittima, oltre che nel pasticcio storico, la sventurata principessa danese detronizzata dall' "Augusto", viene nominata *una tantum* prima del calare del sipario. Assai cinico, addirittura inumano, si mostra il Priore degli Spedalieri (in pratica il capo della "benemerita" Inquisizione locale) quando annuncia ad Alaide, riconosciuta come Agnese, *"Spenta è Isemberga, e riedere, Regina, al soglio dêi. Mi annuncia il* ***lieto*** [grassetto mio] *evento con questo foglio il re"*. E non ha patemi d'animo quel bravo ecclesiastico, che poco prima, ignorando il travestimento di Alaide, stava per decretarne la condanna a morte per stregoneria. Al *dénouement* di una tragedia tuttavia non può addirsi un *lieto* evento e infatti Arturo, che così deve rinunciare per sempre ad Alaide-Agnese, si pugnala: *"Sovra il mio corpo spento ritorna al soglio!"*, mentre la Merania si abbandona alla disperazione della cabaletta finale.

Coraggiosa la scelta del Maggio Fiorentino di quest'anno di riproporre, nella revisione critica di Marco Uvietta, l'ardua *Straniera* belliniana, delicata come un cristallo nobile, senza puntare su un cast altisonante, che non sempre è garanzia di riuscita. Se la regia poco immaginativa di Mateo Zoni, plumbea quanto le luci di Daniele Ciprì, non ha valorizzato lo spettacolo, senza però arrecare devastazioni, immersa nella scenografia assai "spartana" di Tonino Zera e Renzo Bellanca e vivacizzata in qualche modo dai costumi medievalistici di Stefano Ciammitti, la musica si è imposta tanto più decisa. Ha diretto la vigorosa Orchestra del Teatro del Maggio Fabio Luisi, attento a tradurre con estrema calibratura l'ispirazione belliniana, tra abbandoni e veemenze, ardori disperati e lancinanti separazioni. Magnifico il contributo del Coro della Casa diretto da Lorenzo Fratini negli avvincenti interventi di cui è disseminata la partitura, che incorniciano il dramma dei singoli. Il soprano georgiano Salome Jicia,

protagonista di tutto rispetto, si è imposta anche scenicamente, abbracciando agile ed espressiva la tessitura del suo ruolo, mentre il deuteragonista Arturo ha trovato nel tenore argentino Dario Schmunck un interprete robusto e appassionato, benché talvolta un tantino monocorde. Ammirevole Valdeburgo si è rivelato il baritono rumeno Serban Vasile, fervido ed eloquente. Promettente ma alquanto acerba l'Isoletta del mezzosoprano Laura Verrecchia, mentre era fresco, irruente e non acerbo il giovanissimo tenore Dave Monaco (Osburgo). Completavano il cast il basso Adriano Gramigni, che ha nobilmente interpretato i lunghi recitativi del Priore e l'altro basso, il cinese Shuxin Li, quale Montolino, padre di Isoletta.

# Vittorio Prato – Il Bravo

**Belcanto Arias for Antonio Tamburini**

This is the title of a CD issued by the German record company Illiria of a recital given at the 2017 *Rossini in Wildbad Festival*

*The repertoire is largely extremely rare and the performances are superb. The programme consists of arias from the following operas:*

**Bellini:** *I puritani*
**Donizetti:** *Gianni di Calais*
**Balducci:** *Riccardo l'intrepido*
**Coccia:** *Edoardo in Iscozia*
**Donizetti:** *Don Pasquale*
**Generali:** *Chiara di Rosembergh*
**Marliani:** *Il bravo*
**Balfe:** *Falstaff*
**Mercadante:** *I briganti*

A full review by Alan Jackson will appear in the next newsletter



## DIARY

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

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

**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**

**Trieste, Teatro Verdi**
***Lucrezia Borgia*** **17-25 January 2020**

**Pavia, Teatro Fraschini**
***Guglielmo Tell*** **(Rossini) 17 January/ Bergamo, Teatro Sociale 24 January**

**Amsterdam, Concertgebouw**
***Semiramide*** **(Rossini) 1 February**

**Lisbon, Theatro São Carlos**
***Maria Stuarda*** **25 January- 2 February**

**Cagliari, Teatro Lirico (Opening of the 2020 Season)**
***Palla de' Mozzi*** **(Gino Marinuzzi) 31 January – 9 February**

**Piacenza, Teatro Municipale**
***Lucrezia Borgia*** **28 February & 1 March**

**Vienna, Theater an der Wien**
***La donna del Lago*** **(Rossini) 22 March**

**Frankfurt, Opernhaus**
***Bianca e Falliero*** **(Rossini) 5 April**

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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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