over her strengths and weaknesses; everyone will have their own views on which aspects of her art are important to them and how they influence any assessment of her importance as a singer. But we can surely all salute her contribution to the *bel canto* revival. For myself, I find that when listening to her recordings I wish she had sung certain phrases differently. Yet when listening to almost anyone else, I wish I were hearing Sutherland. It was through Sutherland that I started to know and love this repertoire, and the aural memory of her performances remains strong. I wouldn't have it any other way.

Alan Jackson

[1] The stickler in me forces me to add that I think that in 1985 the first E flat was in fact a D flat, part of the Mad Scene being transposed down at this stage in Sutherland's career. It was still electrifying.
[2] This performance has also been issued at what I believe to be the correct pitches on the Golden/Melodram label (GM 5.0024). Comparisons between the two recordings are all in favour of this one, both soloists and chorus sounding much more natural.



Opera in London during the Nineteenth-Century No.8

The Knight of the Leopard

Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Talisman* is convoluted and very long (twenty-eight chapters and over three hundred pages) and had to be pared down for a libretto of a reasonable length. The task was undertaken by Arthur Matthison who dispensed with a lot of the novel and characters and used just the central core. This tells the story of Sir Kenneth, the Knight of the Leopard and his love for Edith Plantagenet, ward of King Richard I the Lionheart.

In 1864 Balfe and his wife leased Rowney Abbey, an estate of considerable size in Hertfordshire. It was here that he started to compose his new opera. All his life he had been plagued with chronic bronchial asthma and in 1865 he moved to Eastbourne on the coast of East Sussex hoping that the sea air would revive him. In a letter to his wife in August he said that the full score for act one was complete, also the piano score. Other work now took precedence and in 1868 he was in Paris to make arrangements for a production of yet another version of *The Bohemian Girl*, this time for the Theatre Lyrique. He returned to England briefly but was back in Paris the following spring. By now the bronchial attacks were worsening but in June he had to return home as his eldest

daughter Louisa was seriously ill. She died on the 14th June at the early age of thirty-seven. After the funeral Balfe returned to Paris to complete his work on *La Bohemienne* which opened on the 30th December 1869. Due to his ill health he did not return to Rowney Abbey until May 1870 when he again started work on his opera. It was not to be, as he died on the 20th October of that year leaving his work unfinished.

It is thought that Christine Nilsson, the reigning diva, at the time, put forward the suggestion that some one should complete the score so that she could keep a promise she had made to Balfe that she would sing in one of his operas. Balfe's widow the opera singer Lina Roser, asked her late husband's old friend, the composer and conductor Michael Costa to complete the score. He agreed, but who was he? This question will be answered in Newsletter 107.

Il talismano

When Costa started work he found the first act fully scored, the second act only partially scored, the rest being simply sketches and working notes. With these as a basis and re-arranging some of the existing score, edding new music of his own and soe judious pruning of the original the score was finally completed as a three act opera (instead of four).

By now the 'Waverley' romantic style of opera in the vernacular was thoroughly *vieux jeu* with the result the Management of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, uncertain of success, insisted that if a production was to be mounted then it would have to be in Italian (just like any decent opera by Wagner or Gounod). The original English text of this "Grand Opera in Three [or Four] Acts" (as it went on being confusingly described) by Arthur Matthison was duly translated by Giuseppe Zaffira and as *Il talismano.* Balfe's last stage work, set in a Palestine at the time of the Third Crusade, was premiered on 11 June 1874 and had nine performances before the season ended in July.

The principals included Christine Nilsson as Edith Plantagenet – thus fulfilling her promise to Balfe; Italo Campanini as Sir Kenneth; Marie Roze as Queen Berengaria and Sig. Rota as King Richard. The conductor, of course, was Sir Michael Costa who also (it transpires) appeared on stage as King of France! How this worked out practically (who temporarily took over his baton?) and whether he sang (improbable after his abortive essay to do so in England so many years before) or spoke, or simply got-himself-up in a modish suit of armour, I do not know.

Later that year the opera was heard in the English provinces, finally arriving in Dublin on 23 September (it is interesting to note that the following Sunday, the 27 September, a pastoral from Cardinal Cullen was read-out in all Catholic places of worship denouncing the chapel-scene in Act I [Balfe was a protestant] and forbidding his flock to go and see the opera).

It was first performed in the United States at the Academy of Music on the corner of the Fourteenth Street and Irving Place, New York on 10 February 1875 with Etalka Gerster as Edith; Clarice Sinico as Berengaria; Antonio Galassi as King Richard and with Italo Campanini repeating his role of Sir Kenneth. This performance was in English and the conductor was Luigi Arditi. It was revived (again in English) as late as 1891 in Liverpool. The last known staging appears to have been at the very anti-bellicose date of March 1818 at Monte Carlo as *King Richard in Palestine*.

My print shows the scene in Act III where King Richard is about to try to despatch the supposed traitor Knight with the Queen tugging at his mantle and a valiant Edith thrusting herself in-between to ward off the blow. **Pip Clayton**



[opposite] The ravishing opening phrases of Cagnoni's *Re Lear*, the only major nineteenth-century opera likely to have its *prima assoluta* in the twenty first-century and in several ways a summation of its day and age. Scheduled for the Festival Della Valle D'Itria at Martina Franca (Puglia) this summer. **See Diary p.38**

RE LEAR

di

ANTONIO CAGNONI

ATTO I.

BIBLIOTECA
R. CONSERVATORIO DI MUSICA
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DI MILANO
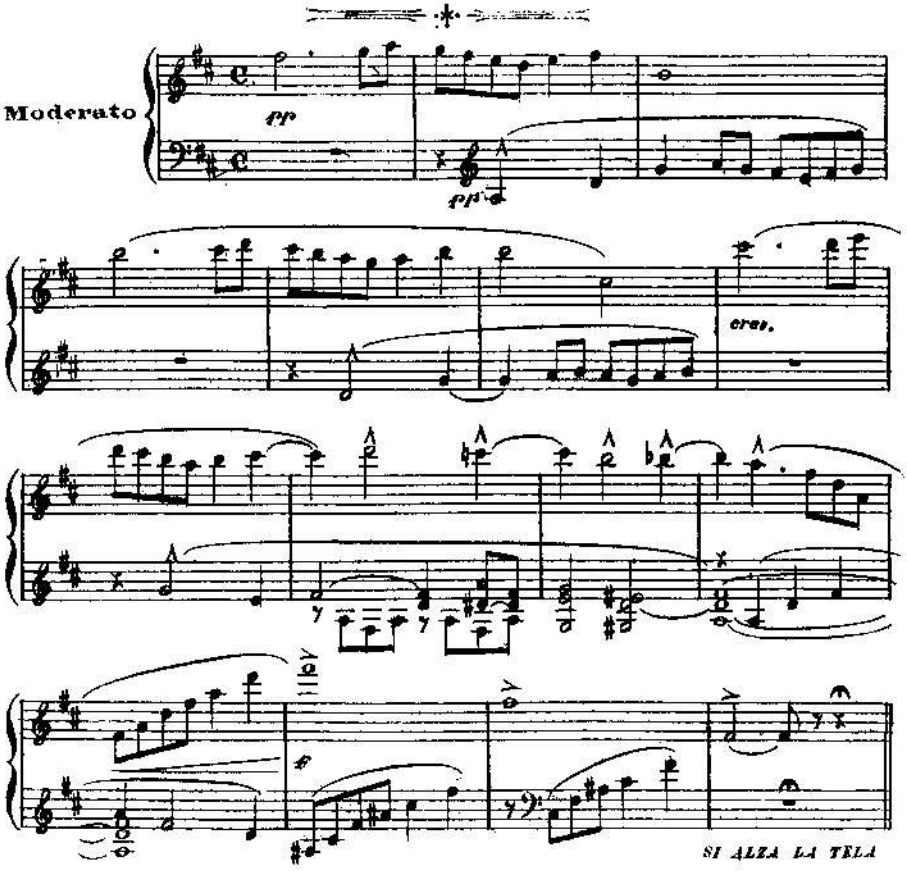
Gran sala nel palazzo del **Re Lear.** – Il trono a sinistra – A lato del trono, in posizione meno elevata altri seggi. Al lato opposto, impalcatura con padiglione – In fondo, larga apertura che lascia scorgere una galleria.

