Opera in London during the Nineteenth-Century No.12

Pip Clayton

LIND MANIA 3

QUEEN VICTORIA AND THE OPERA

In the first of the three articles (see Newsletter 109) I wrote how I had been asked if Queen Victoria paid for her tickets when she went to the opera) and in this article I hope to answer that question not only when she went to Her Majesty's Theatre but also the rival establishment at Covent Garden. What I hope to do is list the opera's performed at both theatre's, how many times the Royal Family attended and hopefully give some idea of the many other cultural events which took place during this period.

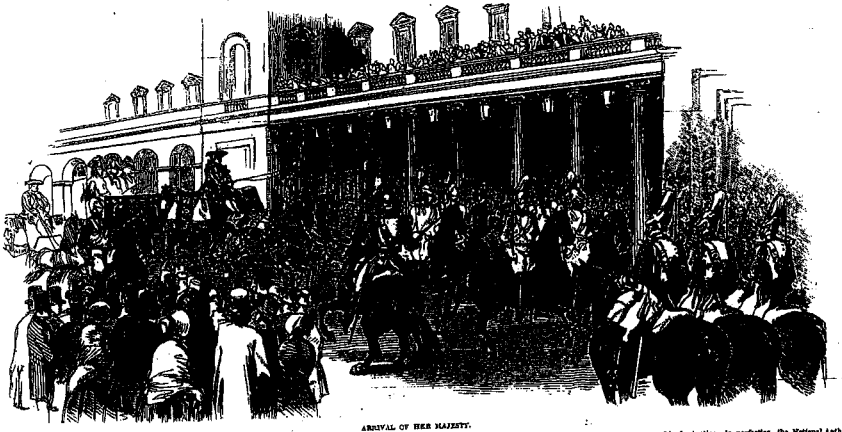
In 1847 the opera season at Her Majesty's Theatre opened on February 16th with a performance of *La favorita* by Donizetti, with Mlle Sanchioli in the title role, and Italo Gardoni (making his debut in London) as Fernando, also in the cast were the baritone Sig. Superchi a protege of Verdi as Alphonzo XI and Mon. Bouché a bass from the Académie Royale in Paris as Balthazar. At a later performance on the 25th the Queen and Prince Albert were in the Royal Box for a benefit performance in aid of the "Distressed Irish", the proceeds amounting to over £2000, (the equivalent today of about £120,000) which was given to the Home Secretary for distribution in Ireland.) Please note that at this time all French and German opera was translated into Italian, and so I will give all the titles in Italian.

Nino, (Verdi's *Nabucco*, the change of title was because at this period it was considered sacrilegious to present biblical characters on stage, even the setting was changed from Jerusalem to Babylon) was the second opera to be given opening on the 27th February which introduced Filippo Coletti to the London stage as the mad king. March the 9th saw the first night of *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Madame Castellan as the unfortunate heroine. She was one of the singers who stayed loyal to Lumley when Costa et al broke away in 1846. But it was a new young tenor who created the most excitement, Gaetano Fraschini as Edgardo. Rossini called him the tenor della maledizione for the passion with which he delivered Edgardo's curse. Then came *La sonnambula* with Castellan as Amina, Gardoni as Elvino and Frédéric Lablache as Rudolfo on March 18th. The last work to be heard before the Easter recess was on March 27th this was the second of Verdi's operas to be heard in this season, *Ernani* with Castellan as Elvira, Superchi as Carlos and Bouché in the role of Gomez.

Her Majesty's reopened on Saturday the 10th of April with Verdi's *I due Foscari* with Coletti and Fraschini as father and son and Madame Montenegro as Lucrezia.. Then on the 15th came *I puritani* with Castellan, Gardoni, Coletti and Luigi Lablache. I think this is the performance where Lablache greeted Jenny Lind in her box during the interval, (Lumley in his memoirs intimates that the date was the 16th). It is Donizetti's *L'elisir d'Amore* that is the last of the operas to have a first night on the 22nd of April with Castellan and Gardoni as the young lovers and with Lablache father and son as Dr Dulcamara and Belcore before the phenomenon of Jenny Lind's performance's came to the stage

Her début in London was on the 4th of May when she sang the role of Alice in *Roberto il Diavolo* the other members of the cast were Fraschini as Roberto, Gardoni as Raimbaldo, Castellan as the Princess, and making his début in London was the Austrian bass Joseph Staudigl as Bertram singing in Italian for the first time. Even greater was the excitement for her next role that of Amina in *La sonnambula* with Gardoni and Frederic Lablache, on the 15th of May. But the acclaim for these was minimal compared to her third opera. This was Donizetti's pretty and delicious confection *La figlia del reggimento* with Gardoni as Tonio, Luigi Lablache as Sulpizio, Frédéric Lablache as Ortensio and Madame Solari as the Marchesa di Berkenfeld, on May the 27th.

THE QUEEN'S STATE VISIT TO HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.



ARRIVAL OF HER MAJESTY.

THE THEATRES.

HER MAJESTY'S.—THE STATE VISIT.

Those who were fortunate enough to be present at Her Majesty's Theatre on Tuesday evening, will long remember the splendour of that temple of lyrical art, which was celebrated (as our French neighbours say) for two *solennités*: the first Visit of her Most Gracious Majesty, and the triumphant success of Mdlle. Jenny Lind in the *chef d'œuvre* of Bellini, *la Norma*. As early as half-past three o'clock, several parties had assembled at the various entrances of the theatre: and the doors were opened half-an-hour earlier than usual. Crowds of her Majesty's loyal subjects thronged Pall Mall, who greeted the Queen *en route* to the theatre, where her Majesty was received with a flourish of trumpets by the head of the Guards, and cheers by those assembled at the doors. Precisely at eight o'clock, the Queen entered the Royal box with his Royal Highness Prince Albert, accompanied by their suite; when instantaneously the band struck up "God Save the Queen," which was sung by the leading members of *la troupe melodieuse*—Mdme. Castellan singing the last verse. The applause at the conclusion was genuine, and highly enthusiastic. Her Majesty, having gracefully acknowledged the cheers and plaudits of her loyal subjects inside the house, sat down; and the performances commenced.

For twelve years, this opera has been deservedly highly popular in this country—there is a charming strain of melody that pervades it, and that must delight every true lover of music.

The admirable performance on Tuesday evening of Jenny Lind, as the Druid Priestess, was as remarkable for her superb vocalisation as her beautifully impressive reading of the *rôle* of *Norma*. On her entrée, she was received with the same marks of genuine approbation as on other occasions, which terminated in some degree by the first movement of the celebrated aria "Casta Diva," when on her concluding the first phrase in bold-toned, and continued for one of those notes were heard, so pure, so full, so well-sustained and de-cisive a length of time, that everybody present was equally astonished and delighted. The second movement was remarkable for a new reading of the text, when she introduced some charmante *fioriture*, which were executed with the greatest precision, truthfulness of intonation, and produced a most brilliant effect. At the conclusion of the first movement of the popular duet "Deh con te," in which the embarrassing of her associate tasks; and she was ably seconded by Mdme. Barrozi, who was the *Adalgisa* of the evening. The beauties of Mdlle. Lind's all the exuberance of her exquisite taste; and she was ably seconded by Mdme. singing and pleading in this rôle are so numerous, that, to do her justice, we should mention every piece in which she has to perform in the opera. We, however, must not omit her exquisite reading of the duet "Ia mia mano allieri in sol," and the celebrated "Qual cor tradisa," which were triumphs in the lyric as well as dramatic art.

The uniform excellence of Signor Fraschini's reading of the *rôle* of *Pollio* was remarkable; he was warmly applauded in the last scene. When we say that Labocha represented Oroveso, need we say any more? The choruses were sung with perfect ensemble, and the orchestra achieved wonders—performing most carefully and brilliantly, and preserving all those manner which charm by their contrast under their talented chef, Balfe.

Immediately after witnessing the divertissement, in which the charming Cerito displayed all her choregraphic fascinations to perfection, the National Anthem was again sung, when her Majesty, her Royal Consort, and suite, left the theatre.

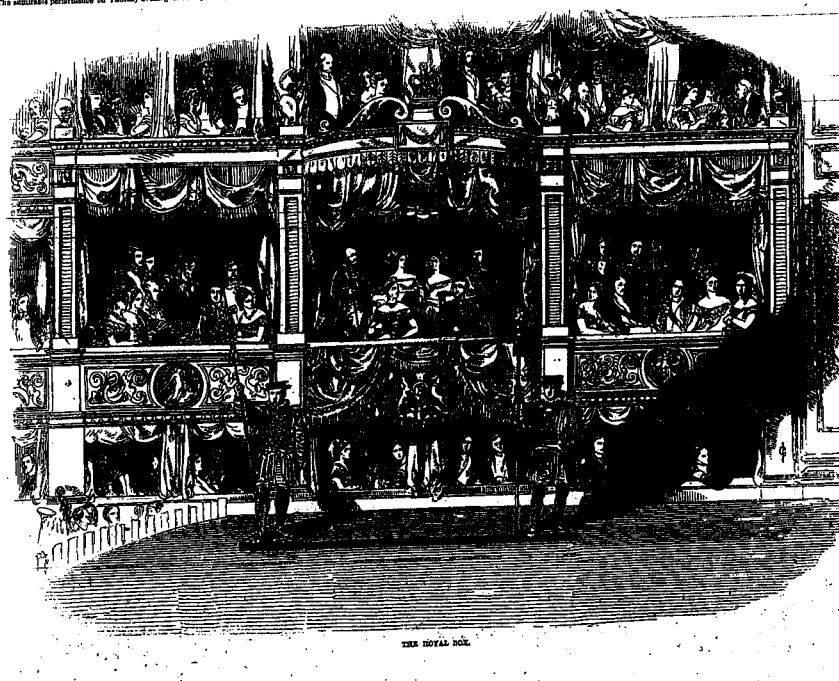
The decorations of the Royal boxes were magnificent. The box usually occupied by her Majesty, the Queen Dowager's, and the two boxes on the left of the Queen's, were hung outside with draperies of rich crimson Genoa velvet, the Queen's, were hung outside with draperies of rich crimson Genoa velvet, trimmed with gold lace and broad ruition fringe; and blue velvet, trimmed with silver lace. The Royal Arms were displayed on the front of the box, on blue velvet; the top was surmounted with a gilt crown; and at the corners, were war trophies; the whole being surrounded with richly-carved gilt pillars. A platform, covered with scarlet cloth, was placed on the stage, on which stood, according to custom, two of the Yeomen of the Guard.

The inside of her Majesty's box was as remarkable for taste and elegance as the outside for gorgeous display. It was lined with white satin, covered with light blue tulle, and ornamented with richly-carved gold mouldings. The same light blue tulle, and ornamented with richly-carved gold mouldings. The same blue tulle was hung with pink silk, over which was white tulle, trimmed with a profusion of Valenciennes lace. There were several pier-glasses surrounded with wreaths of artificial flowers, which had a most brilliant effect.

In the refreshment-room, and in the passages, were banqueted and rare exotics. The passages were richly hung with blue velvet, and wreaths and festoons of artificial flowers, and were brilliantly lighted with lustres.

The whole was tastefully designed by Madame Copere, who worked a splendid pincushion for her Majesty's anti-chamber, composed of crimson velvet, richly embroidered in gold.

At the conclusion of the performance, the Queen sent for Madame Copere, and



THE ROYAL BOX.

But then came the disappointment. By the Queen's Command, on Tuesday next, June 15th, came *Norma*, advertised (see opposite) with the principal parts sung by Mlle Jenny Lind, Signor Fraschini and Signor Lablache. These two gentlemen obviously took the role of Pollione and Oroveso. But who sang Adalgisa ? (It was with some interest that I noted that in all the advertisments printed there was no mention of a second female singer, I had to check cast lists in the daily newspapers,) it was in fact a Madame Barroni.

This was a full-blown State occasion with all the panoply that it entails. The Royal party drove from Buckingham Palace to the theatre in a procession of nine state carriages with a contingent of the Life Guards as an escort. On the stage were the trumpeters from the Guards band whose fanfares announced her entrance to the Royal Box. The front of the box was hung with crimson Genoa velvet trimmed with gold lace, and with blue velvet trimmed with silver lace. Inside it was lined with white satin overlaid with a pale blue tulle. The antechamber was lined with pink sjlk and white tulle trimmed with Valenciennes lace. As custom demanded two of the Yeoman of the Guard in full regalia complete with their halberds stood on the stage for the whole performance in front of the Royal Box, (see illustration) The audience were in full evening dress the men either in uniform or Court dress of knee breeches and white stockings, complete with sashes, orders and medals, while the ladies in beautiful gowns, their jewelry sparkling, all wearing the tiaras which would denote their rank and all carrying a small bouquet of flowers. A sight not seen now, but one I remember from all those State performances that were given at Covent Garden shortly after the coronation of our present monarch.

Due to the inadequacy of the Adalgisa, and the failure of Mr Lumley to find a substitute plus the less than ecstatic reception of Jenny Lind's interpretation of Norma, some of the later performances were cancelled. In the press, it was announced that Mlle Jenny Lind would present to her public one of her favourite roles as yet not seen. It was generally thought that this would be *La gazza ladra* with Jenny as Ninetta. At the same time Giulia Grisi was also singing Ninetta at Covent Garden, and one night Jenny Lind was seen in the audience. We do not know what impression Jenny had of her rival's performance but it is worth noting that Gazza ladra was not given at Her Majesty's that season and the notion of yet an unseen role was quietly dropped. But Jenny was also seen at a performance of *Le nozze di Figaro* when Grisi was singing Susanna, would this be the promised role not yet seen?

However despite the disappointment the season continued with other operas from Jenny Lind's repertoire already heard until *I puritani* was revived and then I Lombardi opening on July 6th with Castellan, Gardoni and Colletti, Then on July 22nd came Verdi's *I masnadieri* which was considered a success (see Newsletter 110) Verdi himself conducted and at the end he was met by cheers and accorded a standing ovation led by the whole Court. He also conducted the second performance and shortly after left London, the remaining two performances were conducted by Michael Balfe. Reading the critics reviews it is quite obvious that it was not the success that had been hoped for. This was only the second of the two operas composed especially with Jenny Lind in mind, the other being *Ein Feldlager* by Meyerbeer. Verdi, according to some critics, failed to make full use of her talent and the role of Amalia became very much a secondary one. The plaudits went to the tenor Italo Gardonii as Carlo, whilst the sight and sound of the large figure of Luigi Lablache in the role of Maximillian released from his prison announcing that he is dying of hunger reduced the audience to tears of laughter.

The season floundered on with repeats of those already seen, until the last production *Le nozze di Figaro* which opened on the 17th August with Staudigl in the title role, Colletti as Almaviva, Castellan as the Countess, Lablache as Dr. Bartolo and Jenny Lind as Susanna. I

DONIZETTI, the composer, is about quitting the asylum where he has for some time been confined, and will henceforth reside in Paris under the care of his nephew.

NOTICE.

Madame Balfe's Soirée Musicale—The Seventh Philharmonic Concert—Mr. Sterndale Bennett's Concert—and other important articles already in type, are unavoidably deferred till next week, press of matter rendering their insertion impossible in the present number.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

BY THE QUEEN'S COMMAND.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

It is most respectfully announced that by

SPECIAL COMMAND

OF HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE QUEEN,

On Tuesday next, June 15th,

Will be represented Bellini's Opera,

NORMA.

The Principal parts by

Mademoiselle JENNY LIND,

Signor FRASCHINI and Signor LABLACHE.

A DIVERTISSEMENT,

In which will appear Madlle. CARLOTTA GRISI, Madlle. ROSATI, and Mdlle. CERITO.

The Free List is suspended, the Public Press excepted.

*** Pit Tickets may be obtained as usual at the Theatre, price 10s. 6d. each. Applications for Boxes, Pit Stalls, and Tickets to be made at the BOX Office of the Theatre.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

The Nobility, Subscribers, and the Public are respectfully informed, that an

EXTRA NIGHT

will take place

On THURSDAY NEXT, June 17,

when will be presented a

Grand Dramatic and Miscellaneous Entertainment,

Comprising the talent of

MADLLE. JENNY LIND,

Mesdames VIETTI, MONTENEGRO, and CASTELLAN, Signori LABLACHE, STAUDIGL, COLETTI, F. LABLACHE, CORELLI, BOUCHE, SUPERCHI, FRASCHINI and GARDONI, and the rest of the Company.

And including selections from Haydn's Oratorio of

THE CREATION,

And Cimarosa's Opera,

IL MATRIMONIO SEGRETO,

And from the works of

Mozart, Mendelssohn, Spohr, Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, Meyerbeer, and Beethoven.

And on this occasion also will be sung,

SELECT SWEEDISH MELODIES

BY

Madlle. Jenny Lind.

The Entertainments in the **BALLET** will comprise the talents of Mdlle. CARLOTTA GRISI, Mdlle. ROSATI, and Mdlle. CERITO, M. PERROT and M. ST. LEON.

ROYAL

ITALIAN OPERA,

COVENT CARDEN.

The Nobility, Gentry, and Subscribers are respectfully informed that a

GRAND EXTRA NIGHT

Will take place

On THURSDAY NEXT, June 17th,

On which occasion will be performed Bellini's celebrated Opera of

NORMA,

The principal Characters by

Madame Grisi, Mdlle Corbari, Signor Salvi, and **Signor Marini.**

To be followed by the first Act of Rossini's Opera

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA.

Principal Characters by **Madlle Alboni, Made. Bellini, Signor Salvi, Signor Ronconi, Signor Rovere, Signor Polosini,** and **Signor Marini.**

To conclude with a new grand Ballet, in Five Tableaux, entitled

MANON LESCAUT.

Composed by Signor GIOVANNI CASATI, the Music by Signor PIO BELLINI, arranged by Mr. MELLON.

The Scenery by Messrs. GRIEVE and TELBIN.

Manon Lescaut Madlle. FANNY ELSSLER; M. de Grieux, Signor G. CASATI; Le Marquis de Granville, M. O'BRYAN.

Also a grand PAS DE TROIS, by Mdlle. BLEDERNA, Mdlle BERTIN, and Mdlle. DE MELISSE.

*** Tickets, Stalls, and Boxes, to be obtained at the Box Office, Bow Street, and at Messrs. Cramer, Beale, and Co.'s, 201, Regent St.

The doors will be opened at half-past Seven, and the performance commence at Eight o'clock.

GRAND MORNING PERFORMANCE.

ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA, COVENT CARDEN.

On FRIDAY NEXT, JUNE 18th,

will be performed

ROSSINI'S "STABAT MATER,"

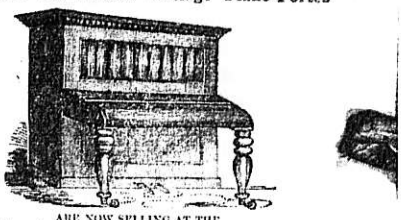
On which occasion Madame GRISI, Madame PERSIANI, Signor CORBARI, and Mdlle. ALBONI, Signor MARIO, Signor SALVI, Signor TAMBURINI, Signor RONCONI, Signor TAGLIAFICO, and Signor MARINI will sing.

A MISCELLANEOUS CONCERT,

ROSSINI'S **"LA CARITA,"** by the whole strength of the Company.—BEETHOVEN'S **GRAND BATTLE SINFONIA,** by the whole of the Orchestra, and **TWO** additional **MILITARY BANDS.**—Conductor, M. COSTA.

*** Tickets, Stalls, and Boxes, at Cramer, Beale, and Co.'s, 201, Regent Street; and at the Box Office, Bow Street.

Warren's 20 Guinea Cottage Piano-Fortes



ARE NOW SELLING AT THE

Manufactory, 71, Leadenhall Street

(Removed from 1 and 2, Liverpool Street, Bishopsgate Street.)

These Instruments are well manufactured of the best seasoned wood, FINE FULL TONE AND GOOD TOUCH. A TWO YEARS warranty given with each instrument. ESTABLISHED TWENTY-ONE YEARS. The only house in London where a good sound instrument can be obtained at the above low price, (for cash only). SMALL PROFIT AND QUICK RETURNS!

JOHN WARREN, 71, Leadenhall St., opposite Aldgate Pump

HARPS.

T. MARTIN respectfully informs the Patrons and Friends of the late Mr. STUMPFF, and the Musical Public in general, that he proposes carrying on the business of "HARP MAKING and REPAIRING," on the same principle as superintended by him for upwards of 30 years for the above-named eminent maker, and trusts that the result of his long experience, and a conscientious desire to give satisfaction, will ensure to him the patronage and support he now takes the liberty of soliciting.

References of the highest respectability may be had if required.

22, *London Street, Fitzroy Square.*

have commented on the fact that though some pieces were encored, so much of the score in Act 2 was deleted that the performance was considered mutilated and therefore a failure.

It has been difficult to ascertain what operas were performed on a given night, if a singer was indisposed the opera was changed for another even as late as when the audience were taking their seats. To try and confirm which performances were attended by the Queen also proved just as difficult. A newspaper may say that the royal party was at the theatre the previous evening but the Court Circular will give an entirely different view, ie that she was a guest of the Duke of Wellington and dining at Apsley House. Even the Court Circular omits some events, for instance the edition for June 16th has no mention of the State performance of *Norma* the previous evening, obviously it was a newsworthy item on another page. Also Her Majesty's Theatre has no archive for this period due to the fire which destroyed the theatre in 1867. But it is from the first of the many Lind performances that Victoria went to that my research became nigh impossible: not all the performances given were those in the subscription series and it appears the royal party also attended non-subscription performances. I have had to check the newspapers and weekly journals to see if there was any mention of Queen Victoria at either of the two opera houses. Mention would be made in one newspaper but not in another and then usually it was just one sentence - Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness honoured Her Majesty's Theatre or The Royal Italian Opera last night, and in most instances the title of the opera was not given. Despite my efforts I fear there may be discrepancies.

And so the stage is set. Two theatres, both alike in dignity, in fair London where we lay our scene - one in the Haymarket and the other in the market at Covent Garden.

But first let us change the conceived idea of our leading lady, that is of Queen Victoria being a rather stout, dour faced old woman always dressed in black. In May 1847 she was a good looking young woman about to celebrate her twenty-eighth birthday, married to a young German prince the same age and already the mother of five young children. Reading the Court Circular or a notice in the press despite the amount of work her position entailed her love of life, her sense of fun and the curiosity that she showed in everything was very much a part of her everyday life.

As mentioned earlier the first visit to Her Majesty's Theatre by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert was on the 25th February to *La favorita.* In quick succession they also went to *Ernani, I due Foscari,* and *L'elisir d'amore,* once to each of these operas, the *L'elisir* was with Castellan. During the rest of the season the royal couple then saw five performances of *Roberto,* and six of *La sonnambula.* Now came, *La figlia del reggimento* with four visits possibly five. Why do I say possibly? The Royal Box was hers and nights when she was not using it the occupant could easily be another family member or even someone from her circle of friends. Also it was known that quietly Victoria would join a group and sit at the back of the box shielded from the view of the audience by the curtains, sometimes just to hear one act. (In fact after one of Lind's performances the Queens coach took a detour to the St. James's Theatre where she took a back seat in her box to see the end of a double bill of French plays.) As well as the State Visit they also went a second time to *Norma,* After *Norma* came another visit to *L'elisir* this time with Lind as Adina. *I masnadieri* only had one visit. I am not sure about the remaining two operas *I Lombardi* and *Le nozze di Figaro* as some papers and journals say the Queen was seen at both of them and others do not make any mention of them. A book 'Queen Victoria at the Theatre' states that she went to neither and that the last performance she attended was *I masnadieri* on the 22nd July. However I am not really sure if the book is absolutely correct as there are omissions in it regarding other theatres. With regard to the question of payment for the opera the Royal Archives at Windsor

paid an annual 'donation' to both Her Majesty's Theatre and Covent Garden. As for the State performance of *Norma* they assume that the cost would have been met by the Government.

The rival breakaway company in their new opera house at Covent Garden opened on April 6th with Rossini's *Semiramide [2]* and a proposed repertoire of a further sixteen operas in it's first season of which eight of them would also be heard at Her Majesty's before both houses closed on August 21st. The other operas were *Anna Bolena, [1] Il barbiere di Siviglia, [1] Don Giovanni, La donna del lago, I due Foscari,[1] L'elisir d'amore, Ernani, La gazza ladra, L'Italiana in Algeri, [1] Lucia di Lammermoor, Lucrezia Borgia,[2] Maria di Rohan, Norma,[1] Le nozze di Figaro, I puritani, [1]* and *La sonnambula.* Those underlined are the operas seen by H.M. the Queen and H.R.H. Prince Albert, and in brackets how many times. The ROH Collection has no record of any payment being made, the earliest record they have is of a donation made by the Prince Regent in 1816. But Victoria graciously accepted her choice of boxes five and six as the Royal Box and it is most likely that she paid a donation every year for the upkeep of the box, any record of this may have been destroyed in the fire of 1856.

The Royals first visit to the theatre in 1847 was in early January to the Haymarket Theatre to see *The Invisible Prince* a fairy extravaganza by the playwright and librettist J.P. Planché. As it was still the Christmas season this was no doubt to take the older children. And at the same theatre in February they saw a performance of Dion Boucicault's *London Assurance.* At the St. James's Theatre a season of French plays was being given and in January they went to see Frédéric Lemaître and Mlle Clarisse in the comedy *La Dame de Saint-Tropez.* Over the next seven months the Queen went to St. James's no less than eighteen times culminating in July with two visits to see the great tragedienne Rachel. Not only did they go to the two opera houses but in March they were at Drury Lane for a performance of Michael Balfe's English opera *The Bondsman.*

That year saw over fifty visits to a theatre or opera house (this total does not include concert performances) but the preference for Italian Opera and French plays meant that where the Queen went Society followed - which did cause some resentment in theatrical circles which was duly noted in the press. But in the main summer months of the season it was the concert hall that drew them. On April 23rd they heard Felix Mendelssohn conduct his oratorio *Elijah* at the Exeter Hall. (This large concert hall which could hold an audience of over 4000 and 1000 in a smaller hall stood in the Strand, originally the site had been the London house of Elizabeth 1st's minister Lord Burghley, later it became Exeter House home to the Earl of Exeter and the site became part of the garden and then a menagerie, but due to the roar of the lions frightening the horses in the Strand it was cleared in 1829 and Exeter Hall opened in 1831 as a hall for religious and scientific meetings - it was demolished in 1907, the Strand Palace Hotel now occupies the site)

The Hanover Rooms were the principal concert hall in London for over a century from their opening in 1774 and stood on the corner of Hanover Square and Hanover Street until demolished in 1900. It was here that Victoria heard Handel's *Messiah* and other concerts given by the Philharmonic Society, and by the Royal Academy of Music. The Concert of Antient (not a mispelling) Music was at the time the most important series of music given in London. Founded in 1776 by the Earl of Sandwich it had it's base at the King's Theatre until 1804 when it moved to the Hanover Rooms. Eight persons of quality were the Directors, each of whom chose the music for the concerts and in 1847 these were the King of Hanover, Prince Albert, the Duke of Cumberland, the Archbishop of York, Duke of Wellington, the Earl Howe, the Earl of Cawdor, and the Earl of Westmorland. Her Majesty went to these concerts and if otherwise engaged for the evening went to the rehearsal in the morning or afternoon.

Mr Bunn's infantile gesture

Over the Easter period Bunn presented a musical extravaganza at Drury Lane entitled *The Desert or The Imam's Daughter* with music by Félicien David, the cast included over a hundred singers, dancers, actors to play soldiers, bedouins and priests, sixty horses with riders, twelve camels, and two elephants. The sets depicted a tented caravan under a starlit sky, a raid by the Bedouin. a triumphal arch on the banks of the Nile, a sandstorm and a Temple of the Prophet lit by hundred's of lanterns. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert took their three eldest children to a matinée on April 29th.

It was in this production that Mr Bunn maintained that he had kept faith with his public by fulfilling the long awaited promise of seeing Mlle. Jenny Lind on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre, albeit in the shape of one of the elephants!

Last words on the LIND MANIA

Toward the end of the season the Princess's Theatre in Lower Oxford Street presented the famous Shakespearian actor William Charles Macready in a series of plays. The press announced that the play on the last night would be *King Lear* and was by SPECIAL DESIRE. One of the boxes was hung with furnishings and decorated with flowers, an awning covered from the theatre entrance to the road. All London was agog with curiosity as to who could it be that was coming. Rumour asserted it was the Queen or the Duke of Wellington, others said it was the Dowager Queen Adelaide or even the French Ambassador, consequently the theatre was packed and the street outside thronged with excited sightseers At the appointed time a carriage pulled up and out stepped Mlle Jenny Lind. The Swedish Nightingale had come to hear the music of the Swan of Avon.

The *furore* that attended performances given by Jenny Lind in London and in the provinces during May to October 1847 reached a climax that same year in Stockholm. She had returned to her native country to appear in the winter season at the Royal Opera House there where she was still engaged as a member of the company. Tickets for the season were due to go on sale at 10am on the 20th December. However by 4pm on the preceding afternoon a large crowd had started to wait outside the doors to the box-office. Word quickly spread and soon Adolphus Square, where the opera house stands, was crowded, shortly before 11pm the police arrived and attempted to control the situation. Some of the public left to go home and to come back in the morning but the die-hard opera fans stayed and the police persuaded them to make an orderly queue. Even so a little after midnight some of those who had left the square to go home now thought better of the situation and rushed upon the queue - broke it up - and besieged the theatre. Consequently a full-scale riot ensued. The police unable to quell the mob called in the infantry, who with fixed bayonets and with some difficulty cleared the square which was then cordoned-off. The box-office duly opened at 10am but there were those who saw the opportunity to make a profit as during the day some of the tickets sold were reputed to have changed hands at fifty times higher than the face value, for example a seat up in the highest reaches of the auditorium was said to have been sold for the equivalent then of £22. sterling, which in todays currency is about £1,200!!!

And a last word on Queen Victoria, or the Credit Crunch at the Palace

Researching the dates of the operas given at both opera houses in order to find which performances Queen Victoria attended I had to check the Court Circular published each day in The Times, I came across a listing of the Green Paper which was a daily bulletin from The Lord Steward to all staff. The following item on May 13th I thought was very relevant for today:

"Her Majesty taking into consideration the present high and increasing cost of provisions, and especially of all kinds of bread and flour, has been graciously pleased to command, that from the date of this order no description of flour except seconds shall be used by Her Majesty's household, the that the daily allowance of bread shall be restricted to 1lb (one pound) *per head for every person dieted at the Palace.*

Fortescue"

But did the two opera houses make a profit that year? Benjamin Lumley said in his memoirs that the 1847 season - opened in the face of the new rivalry - had under such doubtful auspices turned-out to be a prosperous one for Her Majesty's Theatre; at least it was so from the moment of Jenny Lind's arrival. He maintained in the press that he had cleared a profit of over £220,000, a figure which the press thought was highly exaggerated. As for the Royal Italian Opera, you have to realise that their expenses started back in 1846. Giuseppe Persiani (whose wife had created *Lucia di Lammermoor*) had purchased the lease - with a Sgr. Galletti - of the old Covent Garden theatre for £35,000. However the two men soon realised they would need further investment and the music publishers Cramer and Beale entered the scheme. Mr Beale became a director on the understanding that Sgr. Persiani would always keep £5,000 in credit at the bank, which he had to renew twice before 1847. Benedict Albano drew up the plans for the new opera house for a fee of £23,000, with another £4,000 for the fixtures most of which paid for the great central chandelier. The estimate from the builders was about £8,000. Beale made himself responsible for this payment but by completion this latter had risen to £22,000. So now we come to the expenditure for that first season, over £33,000 for the singers; £8,000 for the ballet; and £10,000 for the orchestra. Sgr Galletti concerned about the huge expense simply vanished and Persiani fled to Paris leaving behind bills totalling £12,000. At the end of the season it was found that the deficit was £24,000.

Persiani returned from Paris and paid out £8,000, a further £8,000 was raised by the sale of some of the theatre properties and Beale paid the remaining £8,000 providing that Persiani handed over the lease of the theatre, and so the two original moving spirits learned painfully that opera is an expensive toy and that they had nothing to show for the venture. The story of those first years continued: Beale now was on his own but an acquaintance Edward Delafield a wealthy brewer proposed that he should become his partner, at first the arrangement worked but Delafield had a friend who kept interfering in the running of the theatre. Beale aggravated by this now sold the lease and management to Delafield for just the £8,000 he had paid for it. Exit number three. Delafield was director for the next two seasons and he engaged Frederick Gye from the English Opera at Drury Lane to assist him. By the summer of 1849 he had lost more than £60,000 and left, leaving Gye to somehow find the money to pay the singers and orchestra for the rest of the season. Exit number four. By the following year Gye had taken over as director which he ran successfully until 1872.

The English Opera at Drury Lane mentioned above opened in the autumn of 1847 under the management of Louis Jullien, a Frenchman who had produced the 'Jullien Concerts' in London since 1840. He engaged Hector Berlioz as conductor but the venture was a failure. By April 1848 Jullien was bankrupt leaving poor Berlioz desperate for money, having only been paid merely one month's salary.

The moral surely is do not invest in opera unless you want to lose your money!

Acknowledgements

The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle. The Royal Collection. The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. The Office of National Statistics. The Retail Price Index. The staff of the British Library for all their help in suggesting different areas of research including The Times and Daily Chronicle newspapers. The weekly journal Musical World for 1847.

The following books are from my own library: *The London Encyclopaedia. Two centuries of Opera at Covent Garden. The St. James Theatre. The Melodies Linger On. The Theatres of London. Rachel, Her stage life. Jenny Lind* by Joan Bulman and *Reminiscences of the* Opera by Benjamin Lumley.

To my wife Rosemary an ex English school teacher who persuaded me to write these articles and has corrected my spelling and the grammatical errors which I continue to make.