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*Abstract*

Based on an analysis of some scenes of operas from the 1830s and 40s, the article discusses the strategies adopted by Donizetti to address the theme of the old age of his characters. The composer devoted close attention to it, which the previous bibliography has not revealed in its complexity. In particular, the purpose is to show how Donizetti's characters develop with the passing of time and how their characterization is dependent on the phase of life in which they act. The contribution is also concerned to show that the maturity achieved as a result of this process of temporal flow is bound up with questions of a moral order. Finally, it tries to draw a series of considerations that go beyond the strictly dramaturgical-musical qualities to relate the elements that emerge from the analysis to the society of the time.