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*Abstract*

In browsing a list of musical theatrical performances presented in Naples from the Bourbon restoration (in 1815) almost until the annexation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to the newly founded Kingdom of Italy (1861), we notice that certain dates chosen for the performances of operas, cantatas and ballets recur with a certain regularity. These recurrent events coincided with the birthdays and name days of the king, the heir to the throne and their respective consorts. For more than forty years the Bourbons were therefore accustomed to celebrate their private anniversaries at the theater. After an overview of the contribution that Gaetano Donizetti gave to this particular field of Neapolitan musical theater, the contribution focuses on his only comic work prepared for these celebratory evenings: the *melodramma giocoso Il borgomastro di Saardam* (to a libretto by Domenico Gilardoni), performed at the Teatro del Fondo on August 19, 1827 (the birthday of King Francis I) and inspired by an episode from the youth of Tsar Peter the Great. The clemency and forgiveness that the tsar shows in the opera to the rebels and the deserter Flimann can be read as a heartfelt invitation to King Francis I, not entirely hostile to the constitutional attempt of the Nonimestre 1821, to adopt a definitive gesture of clemency to renew that liberal attempt that was too soon stifled by a ferocious reactionary repression.