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*Abstract*

Performing a Donizetti opera with historicist awareness involves dealing with multiple problems and seeking to resolve the doubts that cannot fail to be aroused by reflections on style, the critical heritage, instruments and concert pitch. As a conductor called on to bear witness to my own experience, I would like to try to clarify (first of all to myself) how I try to build a critical performance of nineteenth-century Italian opera, and Donizetti's in particular, with the awareness that everything that is written in the score has to be performed, but not everything we have to perform is written in the score. By looking at concrete examples relating to some passages of Donizetti's repertoire, this essay discusses issues of vocality, the voice-instrument relationship, harmony, phrasing and color.